


# SQUATRONT

THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO EC COMICS



ELDER  
FELDSTEIN  
GAINES  
KURTZMAN

INTERVIEWED  
HEREIN

JERRY WEIST

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## FAST MAN!

for War Against Crime, and I'm trying to remember what they were. There was "Ghost Ship" [Cotter #39]. You'd have to look them up—and if you look them up, maybe you'll find that saying that I started with incoherence and moved to order seems not actually true.

"The Mummy's Curse" [WAC #11], "Buried Alive" [WAC #10].

OK. Now "The Mummy's Curse" was practically a swipe from the old mummy movie, and "Buried Alive" is kind of a...

### Psychological...

Personal portrait thing, yeah. You know, I ought to leave all this analysis to you guys. It's fun to read, it's fun for you guys to do, and if you're got the insight, that's marvelous. We did those things just by the way we felt, and to now to do on the couch of the analytical psychologist who's writing the notes for those books and say, "Well, I'm not sure if I had personal feelings about being locked in a coffin," or what, I mean... I wrote this as a first person woman—now how are you going to analyze that?

I don't want to analyze your personal intent necessarily, but your professional approach to horror. Let me off the top of my head give you my feelings about this. First of all, I was young and newly married, and I was trying to make a living. I had children, infants, and I was a freelance comic book artist-writer, and I had to make a living. Now, what I had to do was to grind out the material, and really, this may disillusion a lot of people, but to me this was a job—this was another job to do. I wrote a story and sold it. While I was writing it I tried to project myself into the story as the character would feel, whatever the plot was, and then I drew it as best I could in my particular kind of, stylized style. And that was it! When I was finished with it, I got my check for \$232.50, or whatever it was, and I went on to the next one, because I had to get the food on the table, you know, and pay for the car I was going to buy, maybe someday own a house out on the island, because I lived in a three-room apartment. So, really, my conscious drive was to

make a buck. And if, in the process of making a buck, I turned out material that has become, quote, "classic," unquote, in the comic format, and that's about a great deal of comic books, and people are now analyzing it and everything, I scratch my head. I really can't help you on that level. I can't. I'm more surprised than anybody that the EC comics are collectors' items today.

I think a large part of that has to do with the fact that the horror comics tapped a certain adolescent chord; that at a certain age you're interested in the grotesque, and bad taste, and frightened upon material—at about 14, 15. And that's why the horror comics were so popular.

I'll agree. We were in the right place at the right time in the right format for its time, but the same as immediately after that, when television became full blown, they got into all of that stuff here like the Hitchcock show...

### "The Twilight Zone"...

Yeah, well, there was science fiction horror. They were a little scared of the horror, but they were going into that kind of thing on television. And the movies have been doing it consistently, and this latest wave of really Grand Guignol horror that's around now is tapping the same thing. It's just at different levels, you know.

Do you really think it's tapping the same thing? Although I think that at times EC went a bit too far, there are always a sort of a leavening, a distancing from the material that protected the reader in a way that the latest crop of films does.

Oh, yeah, there's no question about it. You can't compare the static panel-for-panel action and balloon presentation of a comic with the actual full color motion picture with its sound effects and voices and spurring blood and everything like that. Sure.

But they're both going after the same thing that you're talking about in a youngster. His curiosity about his vulnerability, his fear of death and the fact that he'd like to see a little more about it so he can feel more comfortable with it. And I think that the extremes that they're taking in the motion pictures today only reflect the extremes in the world today that we face, the kinds of death that we face in the world today as opposed to the kinds of death we faced back when we were writing this in the fifties. There's more awareness of violence, and the great argument now has gone from an extreme that we're not going to do that kind of violence than we did in those days. We thought it was the fact that the United States had a couple of H-bombs, you know, and that nobody was going to fold around any more, and that this was a world of course, it's progress, it's going to be a better, almost instantly in the world, and I think that the young people are appreciating a type of horror that reflects this insanity.

There are a lot of references to the bomb in the EC's. Oh, sure. Well, it was a scary thing. Everybody was worried about it; and I was worried about it. It bothered me. The magnitude of it was new to us, and frightening. God, I remember when I was in the service on EC at the time that the new came of the dropping of the first bomb. And a week later the second bomb, and a week after that the war was over in Japan. I was out in Germany, and my whole life was going to be a civilian again, and there was a kind of an elation. But the same time I was very ambivalent about the whole thing. Here was this terrible terrible weapon... but I was out of the war, and I was back in the world, and I was back in the civilian and buckling down to civilian life and making a living. I began to be concerned about it, that this thing was there and that the next war was going to be a different kind of war. If there was going to be a war it was going to be a complete annihilation suddenly. That was the kind of thing that was in the back of my mind unconsciously—and consciously—when we referred to the bomb in our science fiction stories. It was back then.

But primarily—and that's why I want to leave the analyzing to you people—primarily, while reflecting our personal feelings and maybe reflecting a little bit of the world and the horror stories that Bill and I wrote were commercial ventures to produce a magazine that would entertain people and sell. To get to the nitty gritty of what we were feeling, or what our subconscious was like, I think it's something that's difficult for me to do, especially thirty years later.

I will say that it was very interesting that one of you recalled to me a feeling that I had when I was in service and I was in the line of duty, in terms of an individual and a larger philosophy that I had put into that story where the General sets the spaceship. That was very astute.

I'd like to discuss the early stories you illustrated yourself a little; for example, "Blues" [Voll #3].

This was when we were getting into the little shock endings, you know, the twists, which of course became our "signature." I always loved twist endings and poetic justice, and guys who screwed other people and then got screwed by them, or screwed themselves. Even just glancing over it, I can see that that's what this one was all about, really.

I assume that the idea for the story came from another source.

Our plots came from a conglomeration of sources—movies we'd seen, books we'd read. I wasn't doing very much reading in those days. I was letting Bill give us the springboards, so I would be free in my mind to enter into the room, the room, as it were, if possible. Because we weren't really intending to steal stuff, we were just looking for inspiration to give us ideas to come up with something original. My function was to take the springboards out into a new area.

The art in your early stories is strangely fascinating. Thank you for liking it. I never liked my art. I guess one of the reasons why I happily gave up artwork and moved on to writing and then editing is because I really never particularly cared for my art. And I was in no position at that point to go back to school and start unlearning what I was doing, which was very stylized. It worked pretty well on very covers. But in continuation, in order for me to move along and do a page a day, which would give me enough money to live on, you know, I had to move on... I had to let it out is what I had to do! [Laughs]

Your point about not reading the stories that Bill gave you the springboards from is usually obvious, because the EC story is so different in its approach.

Yes. That's why I said I was amazed by some of these analyses about how the stories reflected Bill's feelings about something, because certainly some of the story was probably reflecting a lot of my personal feelings. But worked out together, and we complemented each other. I'm not sure we had exactly the same philosophies, and I think that later on we diverged more and more as we developed our own personal lives with our own careers and we weren't coming out of from the same background either, but we were familiar with the same things, both being Brooklyn boys, and we were both fascinated by the same things. When we were working on the science fiction, I remember we were on theory on just developing the time loop stuff that we did, for example, to make sure that it worked exactly right, and that it was perfectly logical that the soldier who shot the doctor was the Titanic to stop the disaster was the guy who caused it. And if he hadn't been there in the first place, it wouldn't have happened. So he did a lot of good, instead of bad.

My favorite story in that line is certainly... For *It's the Living*, where the fellow comes back to see a Lincoln and is responsible for his death. It's a great switch on *Bring the Jubilee*, in which the character goes back from our time and changes it into a different time, he goes back to the future, and another future and changed it into our time. Also, your story had such a hopeful over-world outlook.

Well, God, I did a whole lot of things in it. A depressing one. You know, I was a very idealistic person when I was young. Yeah, I believed that human beings could live in peace and tranquility together, and that there was enough in this world for everybody, and that it could be worked out. Since those days I've learned a lot about human nature, including my own, so I don't know what I would be writing if I were writing that kind of thing today, what my attitude would be in the stories. But you had great control over it. I think that's the key, whether an answer to that can be determined by analyzing what's going into it. I think that even though I'm working in a completely different kind of media, the humor and satire, I'm still projecting certain feelings about the world and the things that happen to me, and I'm beginning to wonder whether I've changed that much, if at all. I think from what you're concerned about the springboards, that you look at the stories in question, I would guess that that



## STORY CONFERENCE!

didn't apply in the case of Bradbury and Dark Carnival.

Are we talking about our own stories or the adaptations? Before the adaptations there were quite a few borrowings. Yeah, yeah, not only borrowing in terms of plot, but borrowings in terms of writing style. I was very impressed with Ray Bradbury. I read *Dark Carnival* and *The Martian Chronicles* and *The Illustrated Man*, and whatever else I could get hold of of Bradbury's at the time. I was very impressed with his writing style and I tried to emulate it, I think, in the comic style. We didn't consciously steal from him, you know, but again, we might have been pretty close.

Actually, you did. In "What the Dog Dragged In" [Voll #22] you changed the little boy to a young woman, but otherwise it's a very close adaptation of Bradbury's "The

[He reads through story.] Here looks that way, doesn't it? [Laughs.] Incidentally, the story just before that, "Gone... Fishing" got the idea for that while I was unfastening, and I came to Bill with it, and said, "You always bring springboards. I've got a springboard." And he said, "Go write it." And I wrote it, and much later it was adapted into that short movie, which they did a pretty good job on.

I'm sure that "99 1/2% Pure Horror" [Voll #23] is another purely original effort.

Tell me about it.

The villain makes someone into a cube of soap, and the soap gets back at him.

Oh, yeah, I remember that one now. He's in the shower and it plugs up the drain.

It's possible that you started with the title and worked back to the story?

I don't know. I couldn't tell you if you were wrong or right, because you're asking me to remember something one day out of I don't know how many, thirty years ago. We might have had a discussion about the Holocaust at the time, and turning people into soap. Maybe we came up with it on that level, who knows? We weren't going to do a Holocaust story, but we could do something about soap. I really can't tell you.







## THE URGE TO KILL!

written in text form of course we did that in the *PicnicFiction*—but put into text form and just brought out as a collection of short stories, whether they would work.

On some you can just remove the pictures and have the story with the text that's left.

No, I said that before when I was looking at them. Between the captions describing what's going on and the dialogue comprising it, you really don't need the pictures.

Did you write "Together They Lie" (Vol. 3)?

What's the date?

October-November 1953.

Didn't those guys come to work for us around the end of '53?

I know Weaster started in October, and this story was written around April.

[He reads through story.] I don't recall. It's in the same issue as "Let the Penetration Find the Crime" which I remember was an original of ours. I don't know whether I wrote this with Bill's plotting as usual, or whether we had then started to use Jack Ock, who was my favorite, incidentally. Carl Weaster was next, and then came the other guys, Weinstein and Bernstein.

Did Weinstein and Bernstein write for the *New Trend*, the horror?

I don't think so. I think they came later.

They just wrote for the *New Direction*?

Right, yeah.

Did you write *Psychosomatic*?

Yeah. Not... yeah, well, kind of.

I recall hearing that the character Mark Stone was supposed to be partly autobiographical on his part.

It's possible. I remember that I did a lot of rewriting and editing on the script that came in. Less with Ock than with guys like Weinstein.

Weaster still has his scripts.

Really. Has anybody bothered to compare them to the comics?

I've only checked the first pages of his scripts, because

that's what he sent me so I could identify the stories. On those, there's some minor copy editing, but otherwise few changes.

First pages aren't really indicative of the rest of the script. The openings might have been OK in most cases. That's too bad—it would have been interesting to see.

Were Weaster and Ock the only two outside writers who did any volume of work for the *New Trends* (except for the very beginning)?

Yeah, I would say that. I always wondered why a guy like Jack Ock didn't go on to write novels. He had a good style. He did write one that I know of, that Roman empire thing [Hessians]. But why didn't he just go on from there? I think that Ock could have been a Stephen King, I really believe that. I like Jack. And I liked his writing. If we were bad, his stuff was so close to what I had been writing that it was easiest for me to adapt.

How about the science-fiction—did you get outside writers of the same point (that you did in the horror)?

I don't remember. We may have. Or Bill and I may have continued to write the science fiction.

Did you write any *New Direction* stories yourself?

I really don't remember at this point. I wrote *Panic*. Can we look over *Panic* to find out which one you wrote? The ones that weren't funny.

Yeah. The ones that were funny.

That weren't funny.

That weren't funny! No, I think it was the other way around. I think the first two issues, which weren't really copies of *Mad* but had your course and your own slant, were quite good. Your course were a bit *debauched*—the *Mad* blowing up the train.

With the atomic bomb, yeah. There's our concern about the bomb again. I remember that, and maybe Stein with a very big trap, wasn't it? I guess I was trying to make a transition, and I wasn't succeeding too well.

No, those first two issues were good. They sort of took the humorous aspects of your horror books and made them more humorous to create something that was funny, yet compatible with your approach and style. Then the book became more influenced by *Karlson's* *Mad*.

I don't know whether it was the book or the writers. It could have been the writers. I know I had Jack Weinstein. Is that all I had?

That's the only name I've heard. The thing you didn't write were just joke comedies or inadequate copies of *Karlson's* *Mad*. If *Panic* had continued not as a second *Mad*, but just a funny book from EC...

I always felt badly about it, in that it was one of six books that I was doing while Harvey was doing just *Mad*. I always felt that if I had had the time to spend like he spent on *Mad* that I could have done a better job. But it was just a one week book for me. I think that when I took over *Mad* magazine itself I was able to justify to some extent the potential that I felt I had in the field of satire. But the situation... I'm glad you liked it. I'm not sure I was happy with it.

I only liked the first two issues, actually.

What was in them? The titles of the stories will help me.

"My Gun is the Gun."

Now that was straight satire. I wrote that myself.

"Little Red Riding Hood" was the Grim Fairy Tale

version. For "The Night Before Christmas" I imagine you just gave the poem to Bill.

Yeah. And immediately got into trouble.

In the second issue—"The Lady or the Tiger" is something

Karlson wouldn't have done. He'd have liked "African

Servants," naturally done differently, but "The Lady or the

Tiger" is uniquely *Panic*. "Breakfast with the Fembelgivers"

and "Come Back Little Stranger"...

OK, pretty sophisticated. Where did I lose you? What was

in the thing it was going to be? But it bothered me when the first reprints started to appear, and there were all

kinds of discussions about Wood's story, and Devin's story, and

Inge's story, and nobody was talking about Feldstein's story.

And I had given up the same line in case to write these things.

But that was awful back, and I was feeling unappreciated.

You know, there's never been an accurate discussion of "My

World" [WS # 22].

There was some discussion of the story at the science

fiction panel at the EC convention. I never thought of that as

"Wood's story," although apparently the impetus for the story

was these little descriptions of what Wood wanted to do.

Wood never had a conversation with me about it.

Wrote descriptions, saying that he wanted to draw this

and that.

Is that what he said?

And that you had tried to plot a story with this stuff, and it

was no good because it was just trying to crowd all these

things in.

Belushi!

And so you came up with the idea to use the visuals in the

way you did.

No, but there's a bit of truth in that. What actually

happened is that Bill and I didn't come up with the plot, and I

said, "Just let me write something about all the things in

science fiction." And that was it. I sat down and wrote that

thing with my own visualization of what would go into it.

It's certainly a unique story.

I liked it when I wrote it. I was very happy and proud of it.

And of course it never occurred to me that with the

illustration I would lose authorship of it, it would become

more of Wood's story. And when it appeared in one of Russ

Cochran's portfolios a few years back, there was no

acknowledgment there either. I felt badly about that.

I didn't think that his artwork had a humorous look. But in those days, we were a family. And we still are, as a matter of fact. I've got artists today that I don't think are particularly funny, but belong to the family and so we use them.

You wrote all those stories in the third issue, right?

Yeah, I think I wrote all those. Sorry.

I felt at that point you were trying to make it more like *Mad*.

You say, "make it more like *Mad*," but, you know, *Mad* wasn't doing that much specific satire. Could we do a parallel of the equivalent *Mad* issue for *Panic* # 3?

"Shutkin," "From Eternity Back to Here," "Mark Trade."

So we were paralleling, OK. I guess I was consciously making it a sister magazine to *Mad*.

You recently said that Inge's didn't like the physical horror. But he had an awful lot of stories like that.

Yeah. Well, that's probably why he didn't like it. [Laughs.] I remember that we had some problems with Inge's in terms of the horror. He vacillated. Sometimes he didn't like doing them. I guess he got back from his family, or who knew what happened.

Did you have a lot of discussions with the artists about the horror?

Do you mean, in terms of being against it?

Whether it was going too far...

Oh. Some of the artists were more verbal than others. Some of them just went ahead and did it, you know. They were just very uncommittal, and they too were making a point.

Jack Davis never objected to anything. I never got any flack from Jack Davis. Krigeiteh, yeah. Krigeiteh was verbal on

and on in terms of the moral issue, what we were doing, some in terms of the layout, the art of corpses. He had some very interesting theories, and I think if we'd been allowed to go on we might have developed into something in terms of

some of the things he did. I remember in one it *Impact*—"We did 'Master Race'."

That was originally scheduled for *Shock Superstitious* # 17.

Oh, and it was kicked over into *Impact* when we dropped the other? Well, *Impact* was *Shock Superstitious* without as much horror. It was still the same endings. I remember the

appeal he made for opening up "Master Race" into eight pages. We were having all kinds of problems, when I

would let him do it—and he showed it to us, and it worked out very well. And he was right. You know what's confusing me

right at this minute—did I had Weaster and Ock, was I still doing original too?

Did you write "Master Race"?

Yeah, I wrote it.

Did he write it? And I asked Bill long ago, and I thought he had asked you and told me it.

Oh yeah, Bill and I plotted that. I remember it was a great plot and I liked it. Definitely. I'm almost certain. Why, have you found any other sources?

No. But all the other stories in that issue were written by Weaster.

You mean Weaster wrote "Master Race" [Incredulous.]

No he didn't. That's sure.

I know Ock did.

He said he didn't. But most of the stories at the time *Shock* was written were by outside writers.

No, I think "Master Race" was mine. I remember the plotting of it, the locker on it. I wish the heck I could prove it to you one way or the other, but I can't.

I'm glad you told me, because it'll be in the Smithsonian Book of Comic Book Comics.

Really? Oh, it's my story! [Laughter.] You know, I'm very sorry, frankly, that the writers didn't get bylines in those days.

Obviously there was no reason in the early days because we were writing them all, except for Johnny and Harvey. And later on when we picked up the other guys, maybe Bill didn't

want to disturb the flow that was going on in terms of the fans thinking it was going to be the same. But it bothered me when the first reprints started to appear, and there were all

kinds of discussions about Wood's story, and Devin's story, and Inge's story, and nobody was talking about Feldstein's story.

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This interview took place on July 16, 1981; it was conducted, transcribed and edited by John Benson. His purpose was to record Feldstein's comments for the annotations in Russ Cochran's EC Library, but the resulting transcript seemed of a piece, with themes and cross-references that would have been lost if it were broken up into individual paragraphs. Russ Cochran and Ed Finkelstein were kindly enough to allow its appearance in *Ink* magazine, as long as Feldstein's comments also appear in the EC Library. However, there won't be a complete reprint—some of the material here isn't in the Library, and the Library books will have some comments on specific stories that don't appear here. The illustrations accompanying the interview were done as posters by Feldstein for display at the 1981 EC Christmas party.

The last EC Christmas party was in 1955. According to Frank Jacobs in *The Mad World of William M. Gaines*, it "was something of a fiasco." The big oak barroom, a thing of the past, were replaced by 44.95 sterling suit and proper chairs. Right after the holiday season Gaines had to let most of the staff go. Though the art for the posters that adorned the walls of that party (and later some matted, the ideas are as clever as ever, revealing some character aspect or foible of each member of the EC staff) — Oswald, for example, seemed to think each masterpiece he brought in was his poster job, and might share a word or two. (Note: the column poster for Rick Doornen can be seen in a photograph on page 8 of *Squa Trout #A*.)

FIRST CAME **KINSEY...** and  
 "The Sexual Behavior of the Human Male"  
 —  
 NOW COMES **E.C.** ... and  
 "The Special Behavior of the Inhuman Artist!"  
 OR  
 "WHAT OUR BOYS WOULD DO  
 IF THEY WERE ALONE WITH  
**MARILYN  
 MONROE**"  
 →





# THE EC FANZINES

## A LEGEND IN ITS TIME

PART 5

By Ron Parker

The *Comic Book Price Guide* regularly refers to it as one of the two finest EC fanzines of its time. In a 1960 article in *Comet* magazine about *Mad*, Richard Gehman touched upon the phenomenon of EC fanzines, dubbing it "the king of them all." And John Benson refers to it simply as "the legendary *Hoochah*."

All of which both amuses and humbles me. After all, I didn't set out to create a legend.

*Hoochah* (the exclamation point was generally used to be consistent with the title's origin, the first story in the first issue of *Mad*) is something of a mystery to most of today's EC fans, even those interested in the fanzine aspects of the era, simply because only a few copies remain in the hands of collectors. Even at its peak, probably no more than fifty copies of *Hoochah* were distributed, so knowledge of it is limited to comments, references and perhaps a reprinted article. So if it is indeed legendary, it is similarly ethereal. Even the one person who should have a complete file (namely the Editor and Publisher) had to borrow two issues from John Benson to reconstruct the complete ten issue run.

Whether or not it was actually legendary is a question that is perhaps not for me to answer. Simply because of its timing, it was certainly something of a mafi. The fanzines that preceded *Hoochah*, which have been discussed in this series, were created in the heyday of the EC comic reign, which gave them the opportunity to analyze and comment upon eleven bi-monthly titles. They had, as an EC fan would appreciate, meat for the grinder. What *Hoochah* faced when it started in late 1958, as the earlier fanzines faded into oblivion, was the demise of the whole EC comics line, a less than exciting editorial prospect for any sort of fanzine future. However,

because of the appreciative nature of EC fans, this is precisely what sustained the fanzine. It was the last of its kind, starting at the end of an era. As the contents page of *Hoochah* # 1 noted, stealing a line from *Mad*, "Number One In A Field Of One."

Certainly, within this era, several fanzines did follow *Hoochah*, including Doug Brown's *Spook!* (note the similar usage of the exclamation point), but they weren't true EC fanzines, relying heavily on coverage of Kurtzman's work after he left *Mad*, and are more properly qualified as the beginning of comic book fanzines in general. Which at least places *Hoochah* as the last of the true EC fanzines of the 1950's and, if it rose to any greatness, it was simply because it had a monopoly on the talent of the times.

There was Fred von Bernswick, creator of *The Complete EC Checklist*... Ted White, subsequently a prolific jazz commentator and at writer and editor who enjoyed the delicious distraction of having Harlan Ellison dedicate a book to him. E. Nelson Bridwell, now with D.C. comics, was a contributor. Larry Irie (editor of *Monsters and Heroes*) was a primary source of material. And, most importantly, there was Archie Goodwin, now of Marvel Comics fame, sharpening his fangs before helping to launch the Warren magazines. Bob Stewart eventually began contributing massive studies of *Mad* to help as we began to run out of things about EC to comment on. Larry Stark wrote the classic "Elegy," a requiem to the EC comics era, and his involvement as Number One Fan. Other contributors included Paul Davis (whose art has subsequently graced the covers of *TV Guide* and other magazines) and some fellow named John Benson.

Even the advertising section occasionally featured a talent of the future, most notably as EC was last in the sixth issue from Russell Myers, who would graduate from looking for EC's to drawing the *Bronzeville* comic strip.

The talent was there. It was simply a matter of publishing it.





## AUTHOR-ARTIST GOODWIN & PIPE

Paul Davis, whose talents are now highly in demand for commercial advertising, magazine covers and character posters, was V's early EC fan—a pipe for a national approach to comics in a letter to *Goodwin* & *Pipe*. "I am not offered by the director... known as 'EC fans', but curious and awed by my friends and enemies etc." One of those friends was Archie Goodwin, and Davis met him through the *Goodwin* & *Pipe* suggestion that he write a short biography of Goodwin to accompany it, but Goodwin's own interest and enthusiasm rendered the offer superfluous.

In *Sigue Tron* # 8 John Benson accurately pointed out that *Hoosh*'s start was "a very humble beginning" before becoming the best of the EC fanzines. Trust Benson's judgment on that one. I know he has a copy of the first issue, a disaster that had an initial circulation of six copies, which was about six copies too many.

*Hoosh*'s was the product of a teenager in love with EC's and, oddly enough, never would have been created without the existence of *Potrzebie*, the other of the "two finest EC fanzines" of the period referred to in *The Comic Book Price Guide*. For, as we affectionately referred to it in the days before such a word denoted mere serious and questionable substances, had been created by Bob Stewart and Larry Stark and published by Ted White when he lived in Virginia, but it eventually ended up in the hands of Larry Clowers, an EC fan in Hot Springs, Arkansas. Stewart, Stark, and White, had presumably gone on to better things, unaware that something called *Hoosh*'s would at least delay their exit from the world of EC fandom.

I was living in Tulsa then, not that far away from Hot Springs, when my best friend, Mike Beiste, went there for a weekend trip with his parents. Mike and I were both avid EC fans by that time, I having discovered a copy of *Mag* # 8 on a supermarket rack and learning about the other EC titles through their home ads. Our close personal interests in acting, basketball and most literary pursuits logically dictated that my interest in EC would also become his. We had both developed into fanatical EC collectors. It was during Mike's weekend in Hot Springs that he happened to meet a girl named Nancy Beiste, as you might assume, a good comic book store. Nancy was a friend of Larry Clowers and, while I suspect Mike might have had ideas about this chance encounter that transcended a simple discussion of *Chamberlain* or *Planet of the Apes*, we were ended up with a copy of the fifth issue of *Potrzebie*, which he brought back to Tulsa.

Not that he was going to show it to me, you understand.

We were intense rivals when it came to collecting back issues of EC's, and he saw this newfound fanzine as a natural communication towards increasing his personal collection—an area of availability that I had no access to. But he braggingly told me about the fanzine, and I was intrigued.

His secretiveness was hardly surprising. Our intensity in racing each other to the local used book store after school was such that, on one occasion, the only reason I got there in time to find the second issue of *Wind Fantasy* was because Mike looked back during the "race" (he was always faster than I was) and promptly ran into a parking meter. And if you were a true EC fan in those days, you didn't stop to pick up your first friend simply because he was crippled up at the foot of a parking meter. Not when the second issue of *Wind Fantasy* might be waiting for you at the outrageous price of five cents.

But it was Mike's comments about *Potrzebie* that really brought out my deviant nature. I was a potential writer without an outlet. Someone was publishing an amateur magazine about my favorite subject. Since my creative taste had led to a publication, and since Mike wasn't about to let me see it until he procured every available EC in the country, there was only one solution. I simply dropped by his house one afternoon when I knew he wasn't home and gained admittance to his collection. I was on the pretense of awaiting his arrival. And, having nothing better to do while I was waiting, my only pastime seemed to be in reading something called *Potrzebie* # 5. It just happened to be lying around, you understand, near the door.

And I knew that I was about to become a fanzine publisher. Of course, I was lacking a few things, principally a mimeograph to publish it on. I did have a typewriter, a gift from my parents who perhaps saw my interest in writing before I was even aware of such interests, and I managed to exploit them into investing in a junior size mimeograph and a blank steno pad for my only son. They probably considered it a waste of money, which we never really had much of, but they indulged me.

*Hoosh*'s was born.

If someone were to ask me today to see a copy of *Hoosh*'s # 1, I'd probably like to then and say that I didn't have a copy. My first mistake was that I drew the cover and wrote most of the missing eighteen pages. My cover artwork consisted of one character chasing another ("I'll teach you to steal my EC's!" "You don't need to teach me, I already know how!") in a cartoonish style that would cause most first grade art teachers to consider retirement.

The contents included several pages of quips and jokes from *Booby* (who: information about the New Direction comics and EC Fan Addict Club that I had obtained in an outrageous expenditure (at that time) phone call to Bill Gaines, list of addresses of local bookstores in Oklahoma, Texas, Louisiana and New Mexico (and while I listed two in Tulsa, I somewhat intentionally failed to include the one wherein I continually found EC's is abundant); and a short-lived serial I wrote ("It was the first and last chapter") titled "The Saga of Fearless Frank, or They Got Him In The End." The issue also included the notation that circulation was six copies. As Benson said, a "humble" beginning.

Still, suffering as much from my inexperience with a mimeograph ("Oh, you mean you've supposed to put ink in that little hole?") as from my material, the issue offered a faint promise. It included a review of *Shock Illustrated* # 1, the first Picto-Fiction magazine, by Archie Goodwin.

And it was Archie Goodwin who helped sustain the early issues of *Hoosh* with his writing, energy and encouragement. Although, as Archie might be inclined to say, "The mysterious Them must have done it!" Goodwin was not involved with the earlier EC fanzines, and it was only poetic justice that I should meet him in the previously mentioned bookstore while scrambling through piles of comics in search of old EC's. And it was his own fault that he burst out "I've already got it" when I pulled a particularly rare EC out of one of the stacks, no doubt antedated between the latest issue of *Savage* and a recent *Batman*, and enthusiastically apprised the world of my discovery.

It was a meeting that led to a friendship between aficionados of EC's, hardly jeopardized when he subsequently gave me about fifty extra copies from his personal collection, all in mint condition. And in the ensuing weeks after our

meeting I spent more than one afternoon at his house, perusing his nearly complete EC collection, and babbling about my idea for an EC fanzine. It was a dream, and I knew I couldn't write it all myself. And it was a dream that Archie was willing to help with.

Circulation six? But it was a labor of love. And a beginning. As with any new publication, the title was a problem. "Potrzebie" had been used, and I didn't want to get into the "E.C. This" and "E.C. That" formula that had been standard for the earlier fanzines. "Hoosh" as I mentioned, was the title of the first story in *Mad*, and was suggested in passing one evening by Gene Kelly, an avid EC fan who never became involved in the fanzine mainstream beyond *Hoosh*'s.

Within our local group, Kelly was something of a discovery for me. He lived in a small town about fifty miles from Tulsa where my grandparents lived, the kind of Midwestern town where you fondly recall the smell of freshly cooked chicken on a Sunday afternoon and look in the refrigerator for your "special" lemon meringue pie. Kelly had a coded letter in an early *Mad*, that drew several coded responses from other readers. So, considering the geographical advantage, I naturally looked him up. Not without some implication, you understand, since his residence turned out to be a small chicken farm I had to walk past anytime I wanted to visit the local drugstore in search of the latest EC's. It was the sort of place that you keep wondering why you forget to bring along a cloth napkin every time you walked past it. But Kelly and I hit it off (as strangers with a common interest will do), and he subsequently moved to Tulsa (as in, The Big City) to pursue his eventual career as a commercial artist. And, with such talent and interest, he logically became a contributor to *Hoosh*'s.

He was a peculiarly local cast of characters: Parker, the aspiring writer; Goodwin, the aspiring cartoonist; Kelly, the aspiring artist; and Beiste, who we never quite figured out what he was aspiring to.

Actually, Beiste may have been the most ardent EC fan of the group, but his interest faded dramatically when he ultimately, and quite literally, took up his EC collection of around two hundred issues in a fit of depression after a storm

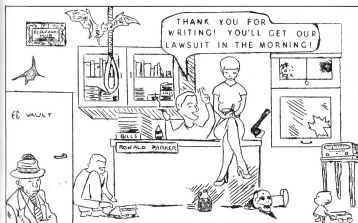
lecture from his mother over some bad grades and the questioning mauling of a girlfriend of the moment who thought that anyone who actually read "comic books" was stupid. I tried to salvage parts of his folly. Later, his dream training led him to Florida to make English translations of exotic foreign plays while teaching students how to become perpetual students. I recently phoned him on the occasion of his birthday to appraise him of the current value of his once complete (and intact) run of *Vault of Horror*. He sounded a little ill at the end of the conversation.

But the point is that *Hoosh*'s was a local production. It didn't start with nationally experienced fans and writers, simply because I didn't know they existed. It was a dream, and a straw in the wind, among a few people who loved EC and wanted to communicate this love affair with a line of comic books to others. We appreciated the writing, the artwork, the talent. And we wanted others to appreciate it as we did.

The second issue of *Hoosh*'s was much more professional than the first for two reasons. One, I'd learned where the hole in the mimeograph was where you were supposed to insert the ink, thus greatly helping people who might have been interested in actually reading it. And, two, Goodwin drew the cover. As a matter of fact, Goodwin almost dominated the issue, contributing a review of the first issue of *Crime Illustrated* and a piece on EC artists' work outside of the EC line. Parker, in the meantime, chipped in with an incomplete analysis of *Two-Faced* EC's and some more stale jokes that were no doubt lifted from *Ballyhoo*.

What made the second issue even more interesting was the listing of Larry Ite as a "New York contact." Shortly after *Hoosh*'s inaugural, Goodwin had left Tulsa to attend the University of Oklahoma, about a hundred miles away, but he was also in the process of trying to get into New York City's Cartoonists & Illustrators School (later to be renamed the School of Visual Arts). Consequently he had established several correspondents in New York. And, while Ite only

Just as EC sent readers an illustrated thank-you-for-you-note, so did *Hoosh*'s!



contributed a letter to the second issue of *Bookah!*, it was the beginning of our exposure to the Outside World. We didn't realize it at the time, but *Bookah!* was coming of age.

Whatever the circulation of that second issue may have been, it obviously reached more than six readers with a dream, because the third issue was well represented by outside contributors from the previously unknown world of EC fandom, including Fred von Bernewitz and Bob Stewart. Despite EC's problems Bill Gaines had taken the time to send a letter of encouragement and a five dollar bill for "a lifetime subscription."

And Archie Goodwin, in the process of moving to New York, contributed a review of the first issue of *Confessions Illustrated* (somewhat reluctantly, I suspect) from Oklahoma University that was accompanied by the following letter: "Let's face it, what *Bookah!* needs is more about Eerie, Bizarre, and what *Bookah!* has got is very little about Elaine Cole. Without some odd to practically seep from their desecrated and keep us constantly informed, we are sort of stymied. So someone has got to sacrifice: as I'll go to New York after the Xmas holidays as your correspondent. My Dad has said it's okay for me to go to Cartoonists and Illustrators School and start the next semester with them, but he doesn't think that he can really afford to send me all next year; he doesn't think that he can raise the cash that I would need for the interstate trip and the first few months that soon. So if you can just take

White for von Bernewitz's original EC Checklist, with Bill Gaines being credited for news notes, including the fact that he had married Nancy Silver. Archie Goodwin had the time to draw another cover as well as a full page cartoon. And Bob Stewart noted what he saw in the growth of *Bookah!* in a letter: "Allow me," he wrote, "to congratulate you on *Bookah!* It is a real, lively, newsy, funny and promising." Obviously Stewart had not seen the first issue of *Bookah!* when he wrote his letter, but it was surprising enough at the time, and it was interesting a five dollar bill from Bill Gaines when you wondered if you were asking too much by charging subscribers 15¢ a copy.

Some readers subsequently contended that the third issue of *Bookah!* wasn't as good as the second issue that had attracted so much praise, which bothered me because I was increasingly influenced at the time by the old Ted White "Every Issue Better" motto that he used in at random before becoming a Dirty Old Pro.

So I intentionally set out to make the fourth issue "special," especially in view of the fact that EC was dying and I suspected I was running out of a subject to write about. I thought if Goodwin wrote me at the time, that your fourth issue should be an all-out smash issue and hang the coat (easy for me to say), because there may not be much to write about after that anyway."

Goodwin was correct, of course, but he may have underestimated the loyalty of EC fans in general, and his own love and interest in particular. *Bookah!*, unlike EC, was in an ascendancy, carried there by the loss of a dying entity through the loyalty of its fans.

If *Bookah!* #4 did nothing else, it reflected my improvements in mimeographing skills, since through correspondence Ted White had convinced me of the wisdom of a lettering guide as opposed to hand carving stencils with a kitchen knife. Thanks to Ted's patience, I was learned what a stylus was, and my new experience was apparent with the "Stylus" page in that issue in which I combined all of my various new lettering guides into one master conglomeration of styles. It might not have looked very professional but it certainly was neater than earlier issues.

The "Stylus" was always sort of an ethereal thing anyway, the principal contributions for a given issue being assigned "titles" for that issue. And it wasn't even listed in every issue. If there was any consistency whatsoever outside of the "Editor and Publisher" it was Archie Goodwin's relatively stable status as "Assistant Editor and Art Director."

The latter capacity was certainly evidenced in the fourth issue, which included five Goodwin cartoons scattered throughout the issue, line drawings in a VIP tradition that represented a High School trend that was common at the time, not only with Goodwin but also Brookhilde's Run Myers and another close friend of theirs, Don Landmark (who would later room with Myers at Oklahoma University). DAAL (as Landmark signed his work) was talented enough that I once published a collection of his cartoons when I was involved in science fiction fandom. It was fearably resolved, yet, among these three contemporaries, DAAL is the one who seems to have disappeared.

Whereas the third issue of *Bookah!* had included Goodwin's Invasion/Theft of EC article, the fourth issue began Fred von Bernewitz's and Ted White's "We're Off to EC" series, which simply meant that *Bookah!* readers were not lacking in information about the latest work going at the EC offices. It was always considered a scoop to tell the readers the contents of the next Mac before the issue hit the newsstand, and several "exclusive" headlines were produced between issues of *Bookah!* simply to convey this valued information as it made its way from New York to Tulsa. Pico-Fiction was certainly a topic of discussion in the fourth issue (recognizing that we were running out of things to discuss). Ted White offering an in-depth analysis of EC's entire attitude in the media as opposed to the previous reviews of single issues.

Gene Kelly drew a nude line drawing for the cover, which I clumsily covered up with an overlay of a Goodwin cartoon that had been featured on the cover of the second and third issues. Not that I was being prudish; I was rapidly discovering girls about the same time that Kelly (a few years older than I) was teaching me how they should be drawn. But a nude female cover of an EC fanzine? Besides, the Goodwin overlay sort of

belonged there, a stubby detective smoking a pipe that had been the central character in *Amber's* previous two covers. Plus, there was an inherent subtlety in such a character (Archie Goodwin being Nero Wolfe's trusted assistant in the novels) that probably escaped most of the readers.

The Goodwin character never appeared after that issue, although it probably should have, having been established as a tradition much as Alfred E. Newman was established on the cover of *Mad*. That it didn't is primarily due to the fact that by the fifth issue Archie Goodwin was alive, well, and carving to death in "New York." That he contributed at all at this time is a testimony to his love and devotion to *Bookah!*

Kelly and I, in the meantime, decided to "uncover" his role (at least the top half) in the fifth issue as part of an Art Portfolio section. It was, in a sense, our challenge to Hugh Decker, while displaying the multiplicity of artistic talent available to me by this time. There was an older Goodwin cartoon that he undoubtedly hated to see in print (Archie always wondered why he hated his work after doing it, the sign of true creative progression that neither of us appreciated at the time), along with a retracing of his hand drawn Christmas card, and several other Kelly drawings that had absolutely nothing to do with EC comics (even you could fit his German general into *Two-Fisted Tales*).

But it was that line drawing of the nude that got us into some minor trouble with several parents, even though we were buried in a 46 page fanzine. It seems that they didn't appreciate the experimental competition of a budding artist competing with Playboy in an EC fanzine.

Still, the odd thing about the fifth issue was its size, not from page count but because of the physical dimensions of the

pages. Whereas earlier issues had been printed on exactly half of an 8 1/2 x 11 sheet, which is fairly standard, this issue measured 6 x 9 1/2, an odd size by any standards. As with any peculiarity, there was, of course, a reason. The people I was buying my paper from at the time (on a liberal credit basis, I might add), were into the scratch pad business, and cutting all sorts of unusual sized sheets out of your standard sizes. They made me an offer I couldn't refuse, and you have to have been a poor fanzine publisher to appreciate that decision.

Larry Ivie made his first strong appearance in *Bookah!* #5, contributing not only an original cover that depicted the Goodwin "tradition" but also the first of a two part article called "The Search For T.C.K." (in which he and Goodwin set out to find the Crypt Keeper in New York), along with a brief piece on M.C. Gaines and the Famous Funnies association under a modest byline that proclaimed Ivie as "One of the World's Greatest Comic Collectors." History dies whether I came up with that byline or I did, but I suspect the latter. In any event, *Bookah!* obviously had developed a prestigious cast of writers.

Unfortunately, Ivie was also the first victim of *Bookah!*'s size change, sending in a pre-printed two page cartoon insert that suddenly found itself stapled into a slightly larger publication. It was perhaps appropriately, as original strip titled "AARGH!", undoubtedly Ivie's feeling when he saw the size change.

As prolific as Ivie was in the fifth issue (he also contributed two other items and three cartoons), the page count had grown to such an extent that it also included the second installment of "We're Off to EC," by von Bernewitz and White, an updated guide to the Pre-Trend titles and their

Larry Ivie's original art for the cover of *Bookah!* #5 is on the left. To the right is the actual cover after the art had been traced onto a mimeograph sheet by Parker.



At Oklahoma reads a copy of *Bookah!* #4 in the EC office, May 1954. Photo by Larry Ivie.

two or three hundred dollars out of the *Bookah!* money reserve, and let me have it to make the safari to New York, I'll promise that I won't miss one little bit of information that filters around the EC offices. So how 'bout it, I'll be a deal? Rarely you, a magazine editor, can raise a paltry two or three hundred dollars. You know, well your mother or something."

Somewhat, despite the lack of financial assistance from the *Bookah!* offices (for one thing, my neighbor objected to being sold), Goodwin made it to "New York" in enough time to include his account of his first visit to the EC (also Easy, aka Elaine Cole) in the third issue of *Bookah!*, an amusing piece that concentrated on his failure to staff various originals of EC artwork and cover paintings into an inadequate shirt.

*Bookah!* #3 also included a short-lived item I called the "EC Collection Competition List," which I created out of awe at Goodwin's collection as well as the egoism of thinking I had the second best collection in all of known fandom as I perceived it to exist at that time. It listed Goodwin at 319 titles, with Parker and von Bernewitz staggering in behind him with 226 and 196 respectively. No contest, but with a larger fanzine readership it might have evolved into an EC readership corner idea when copies cost a nickel instead of several hundred dollars.

It was an issue that also included a pre-stencilled art by Ted

numerical transition into the horror and if titles, several pages of Kelly cartoons, and my own outlandish version of meeting Archie Goodwin while trying to figure out how to throw boys off a bridge as I could stall his EC collection in those days of the 1960s. I was not alone in my confusion. When I read this wasn't enough material, Goodwin found time between tours of 42nd Street in search of hot dog change lying in the gutter to write a science fiction oriented story titled "Peace Conference" which may have been his first published story. I was not alone in my confusion. When I read this wasn't enough material, Goodwin found time between tours of 42nd Street in search of hot dog change lying in the gutter to write a science fiction oriented story titled "Peace Conference" which may have been his first published story. I was not alone in my confusion. When I read this wasn't enough material, Goodwin found time between tours of 42nd Street in search of hot dog change lying in the gutter to write a science fiction oriented story titled "Peace Conference" which may have been his first published story.

Not that the EC aspect was overlooked; like most seasonal items in this issue was Ted White's "The Conspiring," in which he revealed the truth behind the ongoing mystery of the time: "What Is Polarschick?" Polarschick, and what it was, was a favorite EC topic of the time, perhaps the biggest "mystery" they ever created. Yet, there on page 6 of *Roobah*, # 5 was the season, the Inside Information. It was probably the greatest revelation of the time if you were a punned EC fan, ranking on the same level as detailing how to make a hydrogen bomb.

The backs of that issue also included a Kelly mad, except in this case it was a gorilla (well, we were pretty experimental in those days, what can I tell you?). Kelly had done the back cover for the fourth issue, an Army story "We Were in the Jungle," and I had been told that the drawing was a spontaneously drawn ad for von Bernow's Cheesecake, still stands out to me as the best thing he ever drew for the magazine. I made extensive use of my lingering glances during this time, and I remember seeing Kelly's drawing of a gorilla in his house. I don't recall ever mentioning it to von Bernow, who will probably be reading it here for the first time, but the evening that Kelly and I completed the gorilla ad we were so busy that we ran out of time to make extra copies and we proceeded down the street to the Tule River Hotel. I had telephone poles, generally bearing out extruded political posters to make room for our creative genius of the moment. I had a good idea of what I was doing, but I was not sure that I had got a lot of credit for the Cheesecake from the publisher. I was a little bit of a nervous wreck.

Even the latest issue of the fifth issue was significant, assuming you ignore one fan's observation (in reference to the cover of the fourth issue) that "Kelly can't draw." A columnist named Pat Armstrong (President of the Mad Meteor Club, about which he was subsequently to write one of the strangest articles that ever appeared in the fanzine) asked if Hooah's! could force "one or two articles out of Larry Stark." Stark was the acknowledged Number One EC Fan of the era and, as a non-contributor to Hooah's!, was something of a missing link. The only one major problem involved in EC fandom that was not involved in it. It was the only one that was not involved in the on the internet, expressed in Armstrong's letter that I wrote Larry Stark, asking for a contribution to Hooah's! #6.

To my surprise, Stark came through with an article. It was his only contribution to Hooah's! It was also probably the

Fed White's three-color silverscreened cover for Henbuh! #7 probably took half a day to design, stencil and print. The completed job was seen by 50 people at the meet. That the cover was hand tipped onto an 8 1/2 inch sheet (even though Fed hadn't originally intended it to be), added to its elegance.

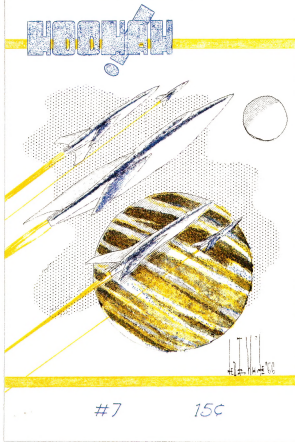
most recent article that ever appeared in an EC fascicle. Titled "Elegy," it was an account of Stark's rise and fall with his band of followers, and the people at EC. I understand it has been reprinted in later editions of Ben Wever's *Checkered*, as befits a classic. There is little doubt that Hookah's was the best of the issues, and "Elegy" was its nucleus. If Hookah's was the legend it is said to be, then this was the best issue of any EC fascicle ever published. But it also contained sadness, for Larry's article expressed the finality of it all. There was little to be said after "Elegy."

Not that these were without its brighter areas. I had been experimenting with small-color micrography and decided to print an Archie Goodwin cover (an EC parody signed "Buffy Crut") in these colors, which had never been used before. I had to make a lot of test prints, but it could only be accomplished in one of two ways: Ink a pad in a variety of colors that would blend together for a single pass through the micrograph which you hoped would look slightly different each time. Or, you could make a series of passes, each of which would be run with that particular color of ink, in the hope that the three individual passes of a sheet of paper through the micrograph might result in some form of color. I decided to try the latter method. I made a drawing of the primary drawing (or, as Archie Goodwin's New York experience would have it, "drawing"). Then I made a red ink run simply to color the flowing curtains that were a major part of the illustration. And I ran the sheets through again just to get the illustration. And I ran the sheets through again just to get the illustration. And I ran the sheets through again just to get the illustration.

to get one artist, Goodwin, to draw ink. "It was a job, three runs just to produce the cover for what ended up as a 54 page issue, but it was fun because Goodwin's cover was so reminiscent of the EC spirit. Goodwin would later comment that he felt that it was a shame that I couldn't have introduced color overlays onto "a little more worthwhile material." But, like I said, Archie always hated his own work five minutes after he "drew" it.

While *Walt Disney* was the key to the sixth issue, it was not alone, even though it ran almost eight pages. Ted White had evolved into a major contributor (much like Ivie in the previous issue), writing an autobiography, a perhaps excessive book and tape review column, and most importantly the "Walt Disney Connection" column, the most revealing of the true origins of Alfred E. Newman. Like the *Walt Disney* Potrebnie, it was yet another scoop, perhaps more significant at the time because EC was planning to continue the mystique of the Newman character in future *Moxy* and there is the thought that they didn't really want any information leaked about the company's internal workings. The "Walt Disney Connection" (another change of page) is a column review of "Movie Pictures (And That Stuff)"; Ivie continued the "Walt to EC" tradition

PAT ARMSTRONG  
THE MAD CLUB  
MELVIN  
CAPER

[illegible]

with a four page spread, while also contributing the second, and major, part of "The Search For T.C.K." and a column on comic book history that concentrated on Superheroes.

And there was Ted White's EC Bulletin, which informed the readers of the not unexpected demise of Picto-Fiction and the information that Shock Illustrated #3 could be obtained for fifty cents. To my knowledge, this was the only way that EC fans of that time were made aware of the availability of the last Picto-Fiction that never saw the light of a newswatch. While reported in *Moohah!* that 200 copies were actually assembled and handed by staff in the EC offices, it was presumably to at least have something to show for the work involved. *Moohah!* readers had the first crack at those 200 copies ... at 50¢ a copy, his how many today? I can't say, but presumably at least a few years ago Bill Gaines admitted to me that he had about a dozen copies stashed away. He also admitted that he keeps them in a safe. It has been reliably reported that Russ Cochran was given a copy of Shock #3 by Gaines ... after fulfilling the condition that he first complete his personal EC collection, including all Pre-Trend Issues. He obviously accomplished this personally acquisitive goal ... and thereby saved the 50¢ tab that was forced upon *Moohah!* readers.

Still, on analysis, *Moohah!* #6 had its weaknesses. Movie, jazz and book reviews contributed by several fans didn't really have a place in "The World's Top EC Fanzine." We were filling pages. The very presence of "Elegy" pointed out that there wasn't that much to write about EC anymore. *Moohah!* had become an outlet for the top fans of the period, but the death of its idol was beginning to catch up with it.

Still, there was time for fan creativity, and just when Ted White assumed I had settled into the peculiar 6 x 9 1/2 size and was to great stretch the six pages ("Gaines' Mad in a Matinee Courtroom Scene" as well as a multi-colored cover and back cover in this peculiar size, I naturally changed the magazine to a standard 8 1/2 x 11 format. As with any transition I made, it was a matter of economic necessity. My father's shaky credit line had provided me with a larger mimeograph, while the paper supplier was rapidly losing interest in the variable stretch pad business and paying closer attention to my bills. The only alternative for the future of *Moohah!* was a new paper supplier, and economics dictated an 8 1/2 x 11 size. Thus, White's elaborately printed cover and back cover ended up being tugged onto the larger sheets, while the "Gaines' Mad in a Matinee Courtroom Scene" became an odd-sized insert, as had happened earlier to Don's "AARGH!"

Naturally, this didn't see me with White at the time, for which I can't blame him. But the material was distributed (typically late) as part of *Moohah!* #7, and despite the size differences White's contributions were probably the dominant feature. Goodwin wrote an autobiography in a humorous vein, perhaps a tongue-in-cheek shot at White's own published book; particularly since both White and Goodwin included "drawings" of themselves. And, at least in the case of Archie's office, it was a whole take-off on the EC "Artist Of The Issue" series. Bob Stewart contributed an extensive ten page review of *Mad*, which was possibly inspired by Stark's "Elegy." Larry Ivey contributed yet another study of the "Elegy" series, while Fred von Berensville's column, which had been forced out of the sixth issue, was back.

And the letter column included some flattering comments from some guy named John Brown who had just discovered *Moohah!* and received all the back issues. He seemed particularly enamored over "Elegy" but, again, I suppose that was before he got around to reading the first issue.

Still, it was not the same *Moohah!*

I suppose anyone with a critical eye could sit down and come up with the same evaluation. But it stands out more to me simply because I typed every letter on every sheet. Except for Ivey (who provided contributions), I wrote every cartoon and ran every page with tender loving care through one of two different mimeograph machines. And I knew that *Moohah!* #7, let alone any subsequent issue, would never rival that sixth issue, when the enthusiasm of a love affair—not just mine, but everyone who ever contributed to *Moohah!*

And it was because of this sense of loss that *Moohah!* struggled on with understandable infrequency. Bob Stewart supported issue #8 with a six page analysis of *Mad*, while

Goodwin chipped in with his cleverest front/backcover combination in the form of a satire on the early science fiction pulp.

It was enough to inspire issue #9, which was actually larger than #8 (36 pages vs 32). Goodwin came back with another front cover vs back cover story line, and I don't recall a single letter of complaint that the girl on the back was a real life drawing. Perhaps EC fans, or at least their parents, had grown up. Bob Stewart was still analyzing *Mad*, I've struggled in with a piece on the "good old days," and the hard core fans (including Brindley and Bennett) were represented by a special three issue idea I had devoted on the relative merits of Kurtzman vs Feldstein. It was strictly reader opinions, but it caused more than a small amount of controversy.

And, of course, that's all *Moohah!* was left with. Controversy, and how to create it. EC had died, and there wasn't really anything to say after "Elegy" was printed. *Moohah!* was the fanzine that refused to die, in the same sense that EC's readers, including myself, refused to let it go.

Which accounted for *Moohah!* #10, a seven page prompted because of a Fred von Berensville trip to EC and an interview with Gaines and Goldstein that boiled down to the fact that they really didn't want to promote an EC fanzine such as *Moohah!* for the simple reason that it had, indeed, evolved into a forum for criticism. And, of course, a fanzine about *Mad*, but of the EC empire, could not survive without promotion.

Gaines and Feldstein were right, of course. All *Moohah!* would have become would have been a critical journal, concentrating on what was wrong with the latest issue of a single magazine instead of benefiting from what might have been right when they were publishing the finest comic books that ever found their way to a rack. *Moohah!* persisted for a period of time, but, like EC, it was doomed to extinction, its writers and artists supporting it to the end much as the EC gang had supported Gaines and Feldstein. And, like EC, *Moohah!* reached a zenith. It could never be the same again.

Still, it had its value aside from a historical documentation of the EC history. It was a training ground for the fans of that era that would become the professionals of tomorrow. Which, of course, is what the fanzine experience is all about. Whether it was a legend or not is a moot point. Personally I think it happened to be the right outlet for creativity at the right time.

Whether it was "the king of them all" is similarly moot. Maybe it was, indeed, the best, simply because it was the last and the contributors gave it everything in their unclouded hope that, somehow, EC might survive. *Moohah!* became a straw, and we all clutched at it.

But there's the thing I'll always fondly recall from those days of stenciling, mimeographing, stapling and mailing out every copy. And that's the simple fact that everyone involved, whether it was Parker trying to pay his paper bill or Goodwin wondering where his next hot dog was coming from, Kelly stapling Checkmate ads to telephone poles or Ivey and White wondering why the magazine's size kept changing, we all had one common purpose. And we were fortunate enough to experience EC when it was a living entity, and we had a lot of fun living with it, and a lot of pain dying with it. However briefly, EC was once ours.

And we had fun.

Oh God, how we did have fun ...

Rex Parker is certainly qualified to write the *Moohah!* chapter of "The EC Fanzine" series, having been the editor and publisher of that unique publication. Parker's interest in EC and writing for it has led to his writing for the *Starline* magazine, *Cosmos* and other fanzines.

He is currently a member of the National Trend Writers Association and is a featured columnist and Contributing Editor for several prominent publications devoted to thoroughbred horse racing. Parker said that his love affair with EC was reborn while writing this article, in the belief that he is participating in the ongoing EC phenomenon with supplemental notes that he hopes will be of interest to EC fans.



By the Summer of 1955 the sales figures for EC had really risen and showed every indication of staying that way. To celebrate, Bill Gaines threw a party for his staff and then surprised his guests by handing out some fancy gifts, in some cases camera equipment. Al Feldstein, who was the only person in on the surprise, wanted a power lawnmower, and it was because that Graham Ingels wanted an outboard motor, Gaines once dryly described this party as "an early example of what later became known as my paternalism."

The artists drew a big poster for a thank you note, which Gaines had framed and hung on the wall. If you can't recognize the art and you're wondering who "Ollie & Jack" are, the John Severin and his girl friend of the time, Gaines does not recall who did the delightful cherub. The Coing, Severin, and Elder drawings are reproduced here full size, the others somewhat smaller.











## EARLY WOOD

Many great cartoonists drew incessantly as children, and Wally Wood belongs to that group. Interestingly, although he wasn't terribly concerned about saving his professional work, and although he gradually shed many of his possessions in his nomadic journey the last 15 years of his life, he held on to great quantities of his childhood sketches. Why? Many of his earliest themes recurred in his work throughout his career. Was he trying to maintain a link with an adolescent sense of fantasy? The careful selection of the name of one's character, the depiction of oneself in a Casdoff-styled tropical bar, the obsession with skulls and thrones, the strange flights of imagination—are these hoarded treasures the key to the work of Wallace Wood?

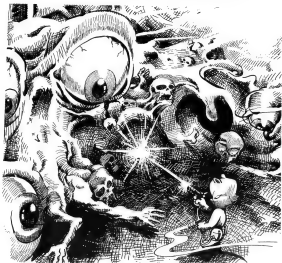




Terry York  
Justin Blade  
Mike Angel  
Mike Royer  
Clint Banner  
Zero Blake  
Zip Haraby  
Tom Flagg  
Jerry May  
Wing Barton  
Kirk Storm  
Wade Barton  
Wayne  
Wayne Storm

Bunt Banner  
Lance Parker  
Vip Barton  
Zip Hunter  
Pepper Barton  
Bunt Swift  
Bart Swift  
Marty Swift  
Carter Swift  
Luke Swift  
Cord Storm  
Cory Mason  
Chip Torrent  
Terry Ray  
Clint Carter  
Sky Banner  
Phil Storm  
~~Wayne~~  
Bick Storm  
Dean Mason





Dean Storm  
Hunt Storm  
Hunt Harper  
Hunt Lareby  
Johnny Arrow  
Bick Foster  
Hunt Raymond  
Hunt Taylor

~~Barney Swift~~  
Martin Swift  
Mark Swift  
Tod Garland

✓ Sick Voyage  
Mike Blaze  
Duke Swift

Terry Justin  
Tom Friday

Blaze Storm  
Mike Journey  
Mike Starr  
Barney Guard  
Martin Guard

~~Barney Guard~~  
~~(Martin)~~

Blaze Barton  
Blaze Harper  
Barney Steel  
Terry Steel

Dean Travel  
Duke Travel

Hale Banner  
Hale Raymond  
Hale Barton  
Mike Vision

Flight Barton  
Flight Carter  
Mark Flight  
Matt Flight  
Mike Gunn  
Mike Target  
Mike Blaze  
Clint Blaser  
Mike Power  
Terry Crater  
Duke Crater  
Mike Crater  
Kirk Crater

Van Garde  
in Outer Space

Chip Crater  
Vance Garde

✓ Brett Banner  
Brett Crater  
Brett Storm  
Brett Blaze  
Brett Journey  
Mike Mariner  
Duke Mariner  
Duke Voyage  
Bart Voyage  
Matt Voyage

~~SKY BARTON~~  
~~SKY~~

BAT BANNER  
TRIP BANNER  
FLIP BANNER  
TY BANNER



The cat men brought out  
the "Cat-Tank"



# TALES OF HEADS



AGAIN WE RETURN  
TO THE GLOOMY  
VAST LABORATORY  
WHEREIN DWELL  
THE HEADS, THOSE  
ANCIENT, ONCE LIV-  
ING HUMAN HEADS-  
AND TO THEIR TALES-

THEIR ONLY WAY  
OF ESCAPE IS  
THROUGH TELLING  
THE STORIES OF  
THEIR LIVES-  
-AND DEATHS!  
-AND IF THEY LIE  
WHO CAN TELL?

















# CARAVAN



# CARAVAN



# PAY-OFF

THRILLING DETECTIVE STORIES



# RAMROD

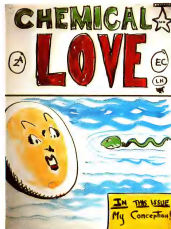




# THE SECRET EC LINE

The EC era saw six Christmases—six Christmas parties whose gag posters adorned the walls. We've seen those posters for 1951 (accompanied by the Feldstein interview this issue), 1952 (Marie Severin's caricatures in the 1972 EC Live! convention program book), and 1953 (Marilyn Monroe, this issue). In 1953 and 1954 the subjects were: "what the staff really wanted for Christmas," a somewhat disappointing series by Kuttanan, and "what jobs they could get if EC went out of business"—conservative John Severin could run a Communist cell and clean minded Harvey Kurtzman could sell French postcards (a prophetic one that). Some of the posters in these two series seem to be missing from Gaines' files.

Here, now, are the very first posters, for the 1950 party. Somehow, one can only imagine EC doing these remarkably uninhibited and unabashed cynical cover parodies in their first year. As time went on they took their cynicism far more seriously—it was poured directly into the books they published!



# SADISTIC COMICS



# THE CRYPT OF CRAP



# APHRODISIAC LOVE



# GET THOSE DIATY JEW COMICS



# CRIME DOES SO PAY!



# MODERN SEX ADVENTURES



# BLOOD COMICS



# DOCTOR WERTHAM COMICS











weren't. Valor could have even continued the Civil War series.

I was the one who asked Kurtzman at the EC Convention what passed if it was a "conscious decision" to go from the gun stories in the earlier issues of *Frontline Combat* and *Two-Fisted Tales* to the contemporary ones. (At least I think I asked that question. I know I had planned to.) Kurtzman's answer now or here was that it was neither conscious nor unconscious.

I guess the "conscious decision" action is a gun story of mine. Because when you look through the comics, you see that *FC* 1-7 were all 2nd-World-guy, with the main character in two or three stories per issue. *FC* #8 and #9 and #10 were the first Civil War (he) were even of transitional issues, and *FC* 11 was practically all and most with the Wild-Appaloose westernizing of the GI's at the end. Similarly the last four *FTF* was #28 which was 2nd-World-guy, which was 2nd-World-guy, *FC* 1-7. Then #28 was transitional, and #29 and all the rest were either more fairly new, I don't think Kurtzman said down one day and said, "Starting right now, we're going to do a new line on the change started. It was rapid, it stopped having people with that trained look, too? (That was one thing that really made me like EC from my parents.) And in the WW I air one personal, because the story was told in a historical, documentary, detached manner. The changeover occurred fairly rapidly, although I admit I could be mistaken forcing an interpretive line on it, but I know I know.

While looking through my old issues, I found a few other interesting things. The covers of *Frontline* #1-3 all cover around a different modern scenario. #1, it's a boxer's guy; #2, a tank, #3, a machine gun; #4, a machine rifle; and #5, a rifle and a bazooka. None of these are taken too directly from any scene in the issues. Starting with #6 (the cover and internal issue, is an extension), all the covers relate to something in the contents of the internal issue of war.

For all Kurtzman's attention to correct

portmound of guns, he didn't notice that Walt Wood, who is sometimes my favorite EC war-adventurer artist, didn't know how a flamethrower works. He worked on "Bomber Bill" (*FTF* 20), especially p. 3. Wood shows a gun's handle in the "unfired" position even when the gas has just been fired, as evidenced by the puff of smoke. And he shows the trigger in an intermediate position, neither fired nor unfired. The trigger is that little piece of metal that sticks up and is sort of opposite the hammer. Look in Severin's "Abney" (*FTF* 28), p. 6, for the correct sequencing of hammer and trigger position. The hammer is supposed to strike the trigger (no smoke puffs) and pop it up. Wood's vague way of drawing all this continued on into *Frontline Combat*, however, in *Flour*, drew the hammer and trigger letter-perfect. But all that's clear in the White Indian stories, which were also set in flintlock (Revolutionary) times. *Frontline* usually didn't even draw the hammer as set. You may be thinking it might be sent to have an article titled "The Game of EC" where you cover all this; but really it's pretty elementary, and anyone who's interested could get it. I at least know my library book covering the history of firearms.

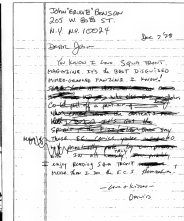
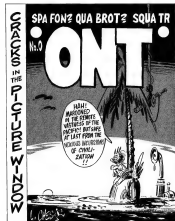
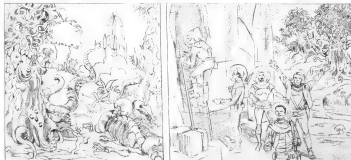
There have been a few other interesting gun scenes. In "Gettysburg," when the older soldier confuses the rifle, he forgets to put a percussion cap (also called a primer; it's like a little levered flange) in the nipple, which is down at the breech end of the rifle barrel. (The gun won't fire without a cap.) And in "Stonewall Jackson," the use of the "Perry carbine" identification is a little off. I believe, according to the most authoritative book on antique guns (it's like the Cowie book *Perry Gun*), the Perry carbine was used by the U.S. Navy apparently and is sometimes mistaken for the Confederate-and-Talbotian carbine, to which it bears a resemblance. Blanking a Talbotian for a Perry (or vice versa) is a mistake in a modern day illustration may make, not a Confederate soldier within the Talbotian's field of view.

You may do an all-Severin issue? I don't

This pencil-drawn scene is said to be the one that Joe Orlando sent to land his job at EC!

think that's a great idea. Severin doesn't have the spark and dash of the best EC artists—on the detail that the non-quantity was like Orlando were capable of at their best. The *Frontline* issue was very fine. It pointed out things about *Frontline*'s art I'd never noticed before. I don't think there's anything hidden in Severin's art to (re)tell me. He doesn't have the unique and/or weird vision of *Frontline*, Wood, Williamson, Leggett, etc. But he's got great with guns, uniforms, costumes, but there's just not enough personal style in his art to sustain a special issue. If you do something on Severin, you might point out the story "Code of Honor" in *FTF* 48 (p. 2). It was actually shown a whetstone theme. And on Page 1, p. 3, he shows a Colt Paterson revolver, which I think was the first large-caliber revolver (i.e. a gun with a revolving cylinder for multiple shots before reloading). And also mentions that shows where Severin accurately shows the firing sequence of a flintlock mechanism. But all this doesn't make him an artist, just an artist-researcher. His drawing isn't that good. If he didn't work for EC, I doubt if you'd be all that keen on him; although I have really liked his work for *Warrior*; it's such a change of pace from other *Warrior* artists.

On the other hand, there were a few artists at that early 1960's period who should have worked for EC but didn't, such as Lou Flier, Everett Raymond Kinstler, or maybe even Paolino, Torres, and Ted Chalk and David McCann. McCann, if you don't know him, is the guy who did the *Star Trek* and *Star Trek* and had the heavy, almost primitive, solid style. At his best, he illustrated a *Star Trek* scene, atmosphere, and his conception of the



On the left, London Chorney's homage to *Marney Kartman* (and *Don Trest*). On the right, a minute from David Kaasoo, co-author of "An Examination of 'Bomber Bill'" in *Squad Troop* #2.





# A CONVERSATION WITH HARVEY KURTZMAN AND BILL ELDER



KURTZMAN: Are you ready to order?

ELDER: I'm here a cheesecake while he's thinking it over.

WAITRESS: How do you want it?

ELDER: Make it medium rare, please.

KURTZMAN: I'm going to have an egg over light, with...

WAITRESS: One egg?

KURTZMAN: Yeah. Some bacon and a glass of orange juice.

BENSON: I'll have two eggs over light...

ELDER: Is that what this interview is going to be about?

Two eggs over light, and eggs, coffee, hamburger?

BENSON: ... with bacon and orange juice.

WAITRESS: Are you having coffee with that?

ELDER: I will afterwards, please. I like it hot. How do we begin?

BENSON: The first time we met, I said that I had thought of your work as being similar to Hogarth's...

ELDER: The English artist? Yes, well, he is a satirist in a sense. Also, a kind of a reporter, making a commentary on the times. I don't have the servants that he had, though. I'm afraid my income is a lot smaller.

BENSON: Your response then that you thought your work was more like Hogarth than Hogarth.

ELDER: Hogarth, yes. Hogarth was rather more sophisticated as far as his art was concerned than Hogarth. I always felt Hogarth's work was symbolic of the human nature of man, the good, the evil, the lust, the corruption.

BENSON: I'm really interested to hear that you're painting.

ELDER: You mean the things I do other than the things I do for a living? The things I do for an artist.

KURTZMAN: Will you get a whole bunch of marvelous paintings at home.

ELDER: I paint, in a sense, in the old French Impressionist school, the school I sort of favor personally. I have any reason why I favor these particular painters, but it's something that perhaps I've been influenced by in my earlier years. And I find that there's a kind of freedom it affords me when I paint that way. I paint light in most of my cartooning, and this is a way to break away, break loose. So I do a lot of paintings at home, portraits, landscapes, Sunday paintings. Typical Sunday painter. Once in a while on Monday, if I'm waiting for someone's approval on one of Harvey's stories, if I have a month off I'll have a lot of painting to look forward to. That's happened over the last few years.

BENSON: You did some wonderful paintings for Trump...

ELDER: Oh, that Hitler's son was Russ Heath.

BENSON: But you did that great cover for Sports Illustration.

KURTZMAN: Yeah, Will did some outstanding paintings. Sports Illustration, the Life magazine parody...

ELDER: "The Eye of Man," which was a tremendous undertaking. And a labor of love because it paid nothing. But it was fun. I think we all worked for fun.

KURTZMAN: And then, of course, that outstanding painting that Norman Rockwell took off (intended for Trump #2, printed in Playboy, Dec. 1957). Incredible!

ELDER: I was always a Rockwell fan. You know, our doctor is one of the very rare doctors who still makes house calls. And one of our kids was sick, and he came to the house. Very strong, very energetic. He believes in the old remedies of "put 'em to bed, plenty of rest, juice, and that's all." No vitamins, no pills, nothing. This man I never saw smile before. He looked at that "Rockwell" painting that's on the wall in our foyer. He thought it was a reproduction at first. He stared at it for five minutes. Suddenly he exploded and hit the floor, like a bag of cement. And I saw a new man break up like that. It gave away his character immediately. I knew he loved macabre humor. You know he didn't fall for the sweet sugary stuff. Anyway, I felt the painting was successful if my doctor could laugh at it.

BENSON: Did you have any trouble matching over from the illustration?

ELDER: Not really. I keep telling people who ask me the very same question that I'm essentially an artist... a cartoon artist. I incorporate everything. I try to. I look at the field as the whole field of art.

KURTZMAN: Will was painting as far back as I can remember. Right when he got out of school he used to be

fascinated by painting. So it wasn't as if he'd switched; he'd been painting all the time.

ELDER: I feel that art is a challenge, if it's fine, watercolor, or any phase of it. Really the basis of my art, the thing that I live for... my... what's the word...?

KURTZMAN: Reason d'être.

ELDER: Reason d'être, that's the word I'm thinking of. The good old French, they have a name for everything.

Actually, cartooning's a phase of my art. What I'm doing now is another phase of my art, a phase I love very much because it incorporates a lot of the technique I've used in the past. Plus the humor of it, mostly Harvey's. It gives me an outlet for whatever talents I have in that area.

KURTZMAN: I like the way Will uses Harvey's humor.

Every time I give a story to Will, moves everything an inch to the left.

ELDER: This sure is slow ketchup, like they advertise. It's frozen, that's why!

BENSON: When did you first meet?

ELDER: Oh, this goes way back.

KURTZMAN: High school.

ELDER: High school days, surely. I barely knew Harvey at the time. I was so obsessed with myself and my own class. I was a real cut-up. I loved to have fun; I loved to upset everybody's apple cart.

KURTZMAN: Will was a big man-to-campus of sorts.

ELDER: No, no, not quite. I wasn't a big man...

KURTZMAN: I said, "of sorts."

ELDER: "Of sorts." Sort-of-nous.

KURTZMAN: At the High School of Music and Art, Will was a star.

ELDER: I was the Maroon of the zany. The Charles Manson of the zany. I was a frenetic humorist.

KURTZMAN: You were a real watcher of stars.

ELDER: You were a thinker.

KURTZMAN: I used to watch these guys from afar.

ELDER: Harvey would absorb everything that was going on. And he's using that today, you know.

KURTZMAN: I remember seeing Will originally, in the lunchroom, he used to have a routine with Al Jaffe. He was Costello to Jaffe's Abbott.

ELDER: It would be more like Laurel to Jaffe's Hardy.

KURTZMAN: No, I think Abbott and Costello was fair, because you were the funny one.

ELDER: I was a nervous one. So I guess Costello would be a better parallel, yeah.

KURTZMAN: Will was very physical back then. He isn't any more. You wouldn't know that he's got a sense of humor to look at him because he's very quiet now. But back then he was a comedian, he was like a stand-up... not even a stand-up comic. He was the Chaplin of that particular class. Will has had a lot of people accuse him of being a comedian and Art member. He had a combination of Denny Kaye and...

ELDER: Early Hollywood influence, the Marx Brothers...

KURTZMAN: Did you know him very well? He was kind of a natural dancer, and he'd do all these physical things. One minute he'd be a ventriloquist's dummy. The next minute he'd be a fighter pilot in a telephone booth, with ketchup dripping out of his mouth.

ELDER: How do you remember those routines? I was a great practical joker. I just loved that. I always wanted to shock people. I always shocked my parents and my relatives. I got out of a machine designed out of seeing them suffer. For some reason or other, I was a deflator of authority, like the Marx Brothers. I loved them.

KURTZMAN: If you only knew the times that I've told Willie stories.

ELDER: You know, when Harvey goes around telling people about my practical jokes, people think it's wildly funny. But while it was happening, I got a lot of nasty looks. People were really injured by it. And I never found anything amusing in it after it was done. It got bootied on the way every time. I did something like that. But when the story's related to strange men, to people who are not from the scene of the accident, time and distance, the thing's hilarious. They happen to be true, but when Harvey relates them, usually in the broadest, the explanation of what happened, there's kind of a mystic aura that's added to it. Because it's not seen, it's part of



month's work.

**KURTZMAN:** And after all was said and done with our sample book and one plane to pull in all kinds of work, we got our first major job through a relative of Willie, a distant relative. After all this lightning and thunder of studio and sample book and letterhead, how do we get work? Through relatives! It was a come-down. But nevertheless, it was our first big score, thanks to Will.

**ELDER:** I'm sorry to say this day that it worked out that way. It was like virtues pecking at a dead corpse.

**KURTZMAN:** We had a publicity brochure to turn out, a movie poster.

**ELDER:** For Paramount Pictures, Ernie Tubbs. Remember the old cowboy star, the singing star? It was a grade 2 movie.

**KURTZMAN:** So the three of us sat there and looked at each other and said, "OK, now, who does what?" Our organization didn't have any structure. It was the three madmen. So we said...

**ELDER:** I covered the cover immediately. I played it safe.

**KURTZMAN:** See, the brochure consisted of a cover and the ad inside. And there were things that were obviously more fun to do than other things. The cover was the plum. So we sat around and said, "OK, now who's going to do the cover?" And each of us came to the brilliant decision that he would do the cover. So we were at an impasse. So we came to the second brilliant decision. We will make decisions by a vote. So we cast three votes toward doing the cover, and how do you think the voting came out. Exactly the same way.

**ELDER:** The democratic system? These politicians in a phone booth.

**KURTZMAN:** I don't know exactly how that brochure got done, but we...

**ELDER:** Did we put out those covers? We put out your brochures, Charlie's brochures, and my brochures.

**KURTZMAN:** I think we did. I think we each made samples. But we designated very rapidly after that.

**ELDER:** I think we lost the account, didn't we?

**KURTZMAN:** Well, they printed it. I don't think we ever really got the account.

**ELDER:** It was a charity thing. He paid us practically nothing.

**KURTZMAN:** So the big lesson was that there's no such thing as a structureless organization without a pyramid. You have to have a boss.

**ELDER:** We would have parties up there at the studio; it was a place to go to at night. After all, we were paying the rent, and it was only used half a day. And we would come into this waitress up from the cafe around the corner, remember? And you're taking pictures, kind of, of course. This cute little girl we used as a model. Well, "We'll put you in a little brochure for Paramount Pictures." My god, she thought she was going home. Ernie Tubbs! They know Ernie Tubbs!

**KURTZMAN:** I remember that!

**ELDER:** Sure! "You know Ernie Tubbs? You're working for Paramount!" She looked at our little fool. My god. The fireworks were going around the room. You know, it was kind of a premiere party. Then occasionally we'd get on this little flat roof that adjoined it. We played basketball out there.

**KURTZMAN:** The left had a skylight, one of those big, slanting skylights. I think that's what made it for us. We said, "Boy, a skylight, man, this is it, an artist's studio!"

**ELDER:** Didn't we advertise by making little paper airplanes with our name on it and floating them out into the street?

**KURTZMAN:** We had a lot of fun. We used to carry on. All of our friends used to come up to the studio. It was a hangout. **ELDER:** We worked very hard at looking busy. It was kind of a watering hole, an oasis for vagabonds like ourselves. Fellows who didn't have the nerve to open up a window.

**KURTZMAN:** We had boards. And a big couch-bed. And a gigantic grid of handmade furniture. You remember Tony the carpenter?

**ELDER:** May his soul rest in peace. I think he was executed the day after.

**KURTZMAN:** This old bed. The studio was a giant bed, and a couple of little things all around it.

**ELDER:** That was sort of a launching pad for, at least,

Harvey and myself, Charlie...

**KURTZMAN:** Charlie used the bed. He was the cockroach amongst us. And he took full advantage of that fact.

**ELDER:** Good old horizontal Charlie. Then we decided to move out of there. After we had these chemical plants were in the building. I think something burst and ran downstairs like a...

**KURTZMAN:** Willie was constantly hanging around with his machines. You mention a fire. The place was a fire trap. I'll never forget one day Willie decided to demonstrate a little trick when...

**ELDER:** That was in the other studio, Harv. Our second studio, the one on Broadway.

**KURTZMAN:** No, I don't think so. Well, in any case, Will appears one day, and his finger is blasting. A gigantic tooth of fire. Because what he's doing is put his finger in rubber cement...

**ELDER:** I think I told you I just stuck my finger in the socket. "Look what happened!"

**KURTZMAN:** ... But I didn't work out the way Willie thought it would, and he started shaking it, trying to pull it out, frantically, and he sent gobs of flaming rubber cement all over the studio...

**ELDER:** Measles is what they were.

**KURTZMAN:** You see these guys jumping around like maniacs trying to put the fire out. But I could have sworn it was the old studio.

**ELDER:** The... above the restaurant, on Broadway. Irving Gels used the little adjoining room, the foyer.

**KURTZMAN:** We got kicked out of the first studio.

**ELDER:** Anyway, from then on we lost the people in the comic book business. At least, Harvey had a few accounts in the comic business. And I had a few advertising accounts with some very strange characters.

**KURTZMAN:** We opened up the second studio, and people came through... Dave Berg rented space. Later Fensky used to hang around, and he's now a big Hollywood mogul.

**ELDER:** Remember the fellow who designed a building at Fairleigh Dickinson, the architect?

**KURTZMAN:** Leon Gekman. John Severin rented space, and a guy by the name of Bob Sals, who I think has died since.

**ELDER:** And we had a Frenchman who was nice. Rene Goswami is now a very famous individual in France. He's a lot better off than we are. A delightful man. [Note: Goswami died since this interview took place.]

**KURTZMAN:** I think we had a lot of people come in then.

**ELDER:** It was a kind of a hub for meeting interesting people. Frankie Dorey, of course, who now teaches art in Switzerland at an art girl college. Very talented guy. And then the Russians. I think that we should concentrate our efforts towards one particular area. That was EC comics.

We're omitting one thing here that I think is important. Harvey had a syndicated strip going in the Herald Tribune. It was short-lived, but it was very unique at the time. There was nothing like it out there. You know, today you have E.C. and you have all these little single one gag things. In fact, it was the forerunner. I think it did.

**KURTZMAN:** I don't know if it was the forerunner...

**ELDER:** I think it was. Well, anyway, nothing preceded it, so's estimate that.

**WATKINS:** Coffee?

**ELDER:** Yes, please. That was an account that kept us all paying the rent. Harvey would be bringing in the money...

**KURTZMAN:** Harvey would always be paying the rent.

**ELDER:** Harvey was the breadwinner! I think he wanted moral support. He couldn't stand working alone.

**KURTZMAN:** I'll never forget when I got married, when I went on my honeymoon, and I came back and the whole thing had collapsed. Charlie had gone to Europe, and he left me holding the bag, dude, the place was a wreck. And nobody was there... I think you guys had to leave.

**ELDER:** And I think our lease was up. The landlord was the restaurant downstairs. The lease was up and I think he was a little hesitant in renewing it to us. There were all these things waiting up in the air about the restaurant and his upstairs. Something was going on. Free lunches or something. You see, eventually, due to the account Harvey landed at EC, we abandoned the place, because there was a place to go,

There was a source of steady work.

And then, lo and behold, Mad was born. And all of the crazy things that at least I had been doing in the past were now put into two-dimensional form. It was kind of a change for me, because I wasn't propelled into the public, as I was in what I would quickly call "house painting."

**KURTZMAN:** One thing I've always felt that the world missed out on... if Willie could have been a performer...

**ELDER:** If he were a performer, I wouldn't be doing as many as I am right now in my cartooning. My energies would be elsewhere.

**KURTZMAN:** I've got little bits of film of Willie that I took on Cape Cod. We were out there once with Jack Davis when we were all young, with our wives.

**ELDER:** Amateur movies.

**KURTZMAN:** And Will was always so funny on film! So funny! It's a shame he could have never been a stand-up performer. Of course, he was much too self-conscious to have been a performer.

**ELDER:** I was, and still am.

**KURTZMAN:** Self-conscious to the point that when he knows someone is watching him special, he collapses.

**ELDER:** Well, that's the reason I sublimate all my energies into my work. Because it's safe for me. I'm hiding. Like most comedians, and most actors. A lot of actors are terrible interviewees. Anything outside the role they're playing, they're completely lost. They hide behind their character. Because there's a need. There's an inhibition that has to break some somewhere. In my case it was the very same thing. I hid behind this crazy cartoon, this crazy thing on paper, which is very safe for me.

**BENSON:** You probably didn't work very directly with Harvey on the new books, since you did the initial...

**ELDER:** Not really. Well, we did it at times, yes, because...

**KURTZMAN:** John and Will were a great war magazine team. John was good at the administrative side of the thing.

**ELDER:** It took me days to look up something, and there were deadlines to be made. Severin would do the penciling and I would do the inking, because he was much faster at penciling than I was.

**KURTZMAN:** John has an enormous capacity for the war authenticity. He loved war [charities]. He loved costumes and he loved guns. Will had none of that, but on the other hand

Will was a great graphic artist.

**BENSON:** They could capture this feeling of the period.

**ELDER:** Well, of course, because Will was through the real thing. Will was in the war.

**ELDER:** I must add that I was trying awfully hard to make a good product. In the first place, I wanted very much to do the comic book business. It was a very genuine situation; he was turning out books as an editor. And I was a good friend of Harvey's. And then here was a chance for me to break in slowly, to become a little more confident in my own work. I wasn't confident as a penciller because I was very slow. I was very deliberate. I didn't have the ability to grasp things quickly, as John did. John had a storehouse in his mind. He knew a uniform without even looking it up. Remarkable! I am not a kid.

**KURTZMAN:** Then Will would come along with his inkpots...

**ELDER:** It was the artist again. It was the art feeling I had for those things.

**KURTZMAN:**... and he would turn the thing into a graphically clear, clean, understandable drawing. So it was a partnership of talents, that was very useful. They complemented each other. And they did some of the first stuff in that partnership that was ever done in the genre of war books. And what bothered me during that period was that John Severin would give me a lot of trouble. Will was all about.

**ELDER:** "Hi he asked it himself."

**KURTZMAN:** John never understood Will's graphics. To this day he is weak graphically. He doesn't know what to do with his ink.

**BENSON:** He certainly does now. Maybe not when he first started on his own.

**ELDER:** He developed. I don't know that I agree with Harvey completely on that. At the beginning, when he went on his own, his stuff was well drawn, but linear, weak. It



Penciling by Severin, inking by Kurtzman. The story's title is "Partners in Production," but where it appeared of old is forgotten.

didn't have the dramatic punch, that overall black-and-white graphic quality that Harvey's trying to point out. Therefore it lost the story emphasis that it needed. It was a—what's the word?—a matter as far as art was concerned. It didn't have any kind of sex at all, to speak of. At the same time I had low self-confidence and I began to draw. I drew very slowly. But the knowledge of my own dramatics of black-and-white helped me a great deal. I think everything we did in the past, actually, helped as grow, develop. And under Harvey's editorship it was all consummated.

**BENSON:** Your work at Mad seemed to spring fully developed. From the beginning your stories were quite different from the other stories.

**ELDER:** I was always a cut-up, as I mentioned before, and I felt that at I could expose this zaniness, this bottled-up zaniness in me, in some kind of medium, I would really burst forth, you know, Explode.

**BENSON:** Did you recognize that immediately?

**ELDER:** Yes, I did. Because I was always doing this sort of thing. I mean, my stories weren't my cup of tea, I did it because it was a living, it was a chance to get into the business and work at it, and develop technique. But Mad gave me a tremendous amount of license. Which most comedians need. Any society needs comic license in order to survive. I always feel, speaking of comedians, that they're actors to begin with.

There's the pathos and the comedy involved in acting...

**KURTZMAN:** You're missing...

**ELDER:** Wait, wait, I'm not finished...

**KURTZMAN:** Will was always full of all kinds of humor country. It amazed me when Will went to work on Mad that there was this unbelievable proliferation of creative... he had all this creative talent.

**ELDER:** It was uncontrolled, in a great sense. I need



Harvey's control. He lusciously whatever energies I had into the proper channeling. Let me say something that I think is very apropos. Harpo Marx wouldn't be Harpo without Chico and Groucho. But Groucho could be Groucho without Harpo or Chico. Harpo was opposed to the kind of organization, the zany organization that Groucho formulated, in a sense. He made everything seem ridiculous, through wordage. And Harpo emphasized everything he was saying through his actions.

BENSON: That's a great analogy. ELDER: And I felt that all my wild energies had to be harnessed into saying something important, something where it needed to be said. And I think Harvey had that great gift of editing all these people that came under his umbrella, so to speak, and control it beautifully.

BENSON: In the early Mad, did Harvey inspect your pencils or make suggestions?

ELDER: Well... KURTZMAN: Oh, did I'd drive everybody crazy!

ELDER: Yes, yes, he did. KURTZMAN: I must say that I—and I think Willie can corroborate this—I was never easy to work for.

ELDER: That's only true for those who opposed your methods. I saw Harvey's methods, you know. The only thing I regretted was going home and doing things again. But I saw the reasoning behind it all. So it wasn't that bad. It made it less draconian, let me put it that way.

BENSON: When you compare your Panic stories with your Mad stories, the stories were inferior, but your contribution is still the same.

ELDER: Well, because that was basically me. It was just another editor. But the fact is, I had to work harder, because Feldstein, I felt, at the time, didn't have that natural philosophical humor that Harvey had. Harvey was thoughtful in his humor. And it was well plotted.

BENSON: Did you write any stories on your own? Didn't you write "Mole" [Mad # 2]?

ELDER: Well, the Mole was essentially something I'd been playing with for years. You know, it was some kind of a fantasy of mine that Harvey put into a reasonable structure and made it more possible to read.

BENSON: What did you do—did you draft the story out and give it to Harvey to break down?

ELDER: Yeah, you always did.

KURTZMAN: I always broke it down.

ELDER: Harvey's great discernment, you know. This character was a mole. He was ostracized, he was kind of a pariah of society. And the only way to gain sympathy that is by having this guy looking like a mole, underground. He had to go underground in order to survive. And he's thrown in jail and digs his way out. It's really a gag—it was a play on words, in a sense, pictorializing it.

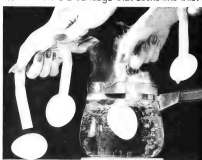
BENSON: Did you ever write any thing else?

ELDER: I did do for Panic. Yes, I did.

BENSON: Was your idea to do "The Night Before Christmas" [Panic # 1]?

ELDER: I was given that particular assignment. I embellished it, and completely destroyed the original. [He checks the EC Checklist.] I am a few things here. "Rebilly" [Panic # 4] might be one. I'm not sure, but I think so. I played very strongly on the comics. In fact, Feldstein

Never before a bandage that sticks like this!



**BAND-AID** with **Super-Stick**  
Plastic Strips  
Johnnie Johnson  
No other bandage stays on so well or sticks so tight.

A 1954 original ad and the "counterfeit" from the first issue of Mad magazine. Kurtzman's text ridicules the copywriter's thinking, but the exact copy was a leading factor that he soon abandoned. His later efforts, where he parodied an ad campaign without copying any particular ad, were more subtle. An extraordinary example was his edition of the Contender Corporation of America's pompous "Great Ideas of Western Man" ("a noble series" series, in Trump # 2, Kurtzman's version with appropriate title design and Picasso-esque pictures) "Crazy Spoons on writing for the last: 'Why wait for the last. Let's stop one up now'.

used to ask me to write, because he was burdened with other stories. He had Tales from the Crypt, was it? And he had other stuff, so he asked me to fill in. So he said, "Hey, Will, go to town! Do as you please. If you're not working for Mad..."

BENSON: How about Mad?

ELDER: Yeah. Of course, Feldstein would oversee everything, make sure it fit the proper page length, and was in on time. He'd give me complete freedom.

BENSON: How about Mad?

ELDER: That was pretty much Harvey.

KURTZMAN: I wrote everything.

ELDER: But, you see, Harvey had given me complete license and freedom to fit anything I wanted within his story form, which I did. I actually recreated a lot of things without destroying the original script, if that was possible. But that's what I loved about the magazine. Because here was a chance to do what I pleased, to run loose, so to speak.

BENSON: What would you say is the difference between your working relationship at that time and today with Annie Fanny?

KURTZMAN: Much free.

Never before a bandage that sticks like this!

(Get the wicker underwear!)



When you get your wicker underwear, it's the perfect gift for the person who has the perfect gift for you. When you get your wicker underwear, it's the perfect gift for the person who has the perfect gift for you. When you get your wicker underwear, it's the perfect gift for the person who has the perfect gift for you.

**BIND-AID** with **Super-Sticky**  
Plastic Strips  
Stickin' & Stickin'  
No other bandage sticks to your eggs so well.

ELDER: It was much freer, much more free-wheeling then. This is a much lighter controlled medium we're working with now. Not only that, but we have about fifty million editors overseeing everything that's done, and sometimes, that kind of limits...

KURTZMAN: The difference, basically, is that the Mad format was our own. The Annie Fanny format is as much Redner's as it is ours.

ELDER: Yeah, that's true.

BENSON: Can I ask about your collaboration with Bernie Rogovin on "Bringing Back Father" [Mad # 17]?

ELDER: I had Bernie very much. He's a very sensitive human being.

KURTZMAN: He was essentially a sweet man. He wasn't easy to work with though. He was never quite on target for me. He was partly on target—I mean, I'd chosen him for his very specific talent. I knew that he could get as close to that grin reality style as anybody. But he was never quite on target, never quite understood the humor.

ELDER: He didn't feel it. I don't think he was there.

KURTZMAN: The problem is that Bernie, God bless him, was never as humorous as a little clearer. I found it was cluttered, unclear. It was too complex.

BENSON: I thought he did a wonderful job on "From Eternity Back to Here" [Mad # 12].

KURTZMAN: Maybe so, but I tell you, Bernie is not a funny guy. Not a funny guy.

ELDER: No, I think he's a serious artist.

KURTZMAN: Serious.

BENSON: In "From Eternity Back to Here" his sense of

what was funny, which was doing classic caricature. American illustration, worked very well with your script.

KURTZMAN: There's no doubt that Bernie is an intense artist, actually, he's the, I think, the outstanding artist in comic books. He had a feel for graphics second to nobody. I can think of in the comics field. A sensitive, intelligent approach to comic graphics. There's no doubt about that. So in that department he gets good marks. But he just... for me, he didn't have the humor.

ELDER: I think there's types of areas of humor, if you can get it that way. There's always a sense of humor that seems to be appropriate for somebody. My sense of humor's on the easy side. It's slightly thought-out, sensitive. It isn't just random. Because those running gags I had in my cartoons were all planned. They were apropos to what Harvey was trying to say. Bernie might have a sense of humor that appealed to you, but not in the sense of Mad comics. A different entirely type of humor.

KURTZMAN: Everybody has a different sense of humor. It really doesn't matter which way is up. Except... my problem with Bernie was that, whatever his humor was, he wouldn't get the point!

ELDER: The real reason is that Bernie made Harvey feel like a failure!

KURTZMAN: He would not get the point!

BENSON: Both of these stories were experiments. And I felt that "From Eternity Back to Here" was a successful experiment. Kravitz's caricatures of the famous actors worked well with the story. I felt the other one wasn't a successful an experiment.

ELDER: That's an interesting word you used, "experiment." That's the thing I miss about the old days. Well, actually "the old days" for me were rotten! It's just that we had fun, we couldn't repeat it because we'd look kind of ridiculous at this stage. But "experiment" was what was beautiful about those days, at least with Mad. Today, when everything is kind of structured and accurate and symmetrical, you lose that freedom.

KURTZMAN: The thing is, working with Will and Jack Davis and Wally Wood, they always get the point. They knew what I was trying to say and they carried it forward. That's quite a difference, working with somebody who can carry a thing forward, as opposed to a guy who really doesn't know what it is you're getting at. So he carries it forward his way, not knowing where he's supposed to go. And that was the trouble.

BENSON: I still say that it is spite of the fact that he didn't do what you wanted him to do...

KURTZMAN: It was a very subtle experiment, yeah.

BENSON: What did you think of "Bringing Back Father"?

ELDER: It was strange to me. I think I almost saw it the way Harvey did. I worked so hard at what I did, trying to make it as funny as I possibly could. Then, suddenly, it was broken up by these very serious, very serious, almost depressing illustrations. It was a complete departure. I would rather have seen something a little clearer. I found it was cluttered, unclear. It was too complex.

BENSON: The only I had a problem with it. You're getting a stylized view of reality in "Bringing Up Father." And you haven't controlled reality. And you're just controlling it with another stylized view of reality. I thought the contrast with reality worked better in "Mickey Rodent" [Mad # 19], with the real ducks at the end. His work was too



DAUGHTER  
OF THE  
REGIMENT  
M. SEVERIN

GENERAL LE MAQUIS  
FIELD MARSHAL, C.O.  
H. KURTZMAN

DISPATCH-RIDER  
LIAISON-CORP.  
J. DEFUCCIO

PICKET-  
BOTANIST  
W. ELDER

SCOUT-  
PIETICIAN  
J. SEVERIN

GALVANIZED  
YANKEE-  
SHARPSHOOTER  
J. DAVIS

BALLOON  
OBSERVER  
UNION A.F.  
W. WOOD

Here's the view of the 1871 war comics as seen by John Severin. These two studies (brought together here for the first time since they were drawn in the early 1870s) show that Severin's keen sense of observation could be effectively—and affectively—applied to caricature. Note that the implied comment on Woody's authenticity above has been somewhat softened in the

(unusually later) version below. In fact, only Dr. Picket's pose, which reflects the respect Severin had for his close friend, remains the same in both drawings. Elder's rank of "botanist" refers to an informal head-to-toe case of poison ivy that he once caught.



GENERAL LE MAQUIS  
FIELD MARSHAL, C.O.  
H. KURTZMAN

CHIEF SCOUT  
PIETICIAN  
J. SEVERIN

GALVANIZED  
YANKEE,  
SHARPSHOOTER  
J. DAVIS

LANCE CORPORAL,  
BANNERMAN  
W. WOOD

PICKET,  
BOTANIST  
W. ELDER

DISPATCH-RIDER  
LIAISON-CORPORAL  
J. DEFUCCIO

AMAZON-NURSE  
M. SEVERIN

refused to consent properly.

KURTZMAN: It was worse than that. He didn't understand the humor. What he should have done was, he should have said, "OK, I'm going to do something like"—I don't know who, but Art Young comes to mind—"Art Young's drawings of poverty." It had to be someone who could do a picture with a twinkle in his eye, who knew that when he was drawing the grime he had his finger on the side of his nose. He was fooling you. But Bernie didn't do that. He did funny gestures, grins as if he were kidding.

ELDER: I'll tell you what I saw. I saw clutter. There wasn't enough clarity to distinguish what he was saying. Maybe if it had been clearer.

KURTZMAN: Bernie didn't have any problem in clarity. He was a great graphic cartoonist. It just wasn't funny. But you're right about what Willie did that Donald Duck thing, that Willie made the point.

BENSON: Didn't he do the same thing in "The Courtship" [Mad # 14], the TV show parody. It was all cartooning until the end, and then when you saw the men behind the camera it was very realistic.

KURTZMAN: Right. You see now, Jack had the twinkle in his eye. Jack understood. It's interesting, the guys who have humor. Take a guy like Wally Wood, who's so interested that you don't know what his talent is because he never talks. But Wally had a nice sense of humor. And when he sat down and put his hand to the thing he humor could be all right.

ELDER: What did you think of our take-offs on the ads, the magazine ads?

BENSON: When I first saw them I thought they were amazing. Nothing like that had ever been done before!

ELDER: That's not entirely true. Judge magazine did things like that.

BENSON: But they never did it with the understanding.

KURTZMAN: There was a time when nobody used to do the cartoonist. We would do a counterfeited parody, at great expense. You understood what I mean when I say "counterfeited"?

ELDER: It looked authentic, but it wasn't.

KURTZMAN: Right. Where your parody is carried to that extreme where you render it with the same meticulousness that the original was. Up until then, parodies had been done in a slapdash way, in all the magazines, but they were never always be extremely crude parodies. And we brought in the concept of creating pleasure not only for the idea of the parody, but the idea plus the actual rendering.

BENSON: But you did not say what you saw funny about an ad on New York. You got to the heart of Madison Avenue's idea of building a whole campaign around something that's irrelevant to the product. My favorite was your line, "One other language sticks to dry as a bone."

ELDER: To me it was the playing down of the public's intelligence. Harvey got to the germ, the target.

KURTZMAN: Madison Avenue was always a good target. The frame of reference on Madison Avenue is to ad. And our frame of reference is the truth.

ELDER: Irrelevant... exploitative...

KURTZMAN: Madison Avenue has no desire to tell us things that are true and honest. Their first problem is to make you buy a product. So, very often, they lie. If you understand a lie, then you can make it funny, satirize it.

BENSON: But after they tell you an irrelevant fact, if they can't tell you the truth about their product, they tell you something that's true but unrelated and hope that you'll think they've said something true about the product. You would expose that by pointing out that their truth had nothing to do with the product.

KURTZMAN: And consequently wasn't the truth.

ELDER: It was a form of brainwashing, let's put it that way. They made you believe what they wanted you to believe. And I think Harvey saw that.

BENSON: Your collaboration on Annie Fanny has somewhat changed over the years. Harvey has become more directly involved in the art.

KURTZMAN: Basically, we started out working with a large group of people. The whole idea was to cover a lot of work.

ELDER: ... in a short amount of time...

KURTZMAN: ... by using a large team. And over the years

we slowly discovered that it was more heartache than it was worth. I'm speaking for myself. I don't know about you, Will.

ELDER: Oh, it was heartache. KURTZMAN: We came down to a system the two of us could handle. I think the results are a lot more artistic and a lot more gratifying.

ELDER: A lot closer. There's no clutter and confusion, that's the main thing. Because we were getting a crazy-quilt of different, not only techniques but attitudes, senses of humor.

KURTZMAN: A crazy-quilt of problems!

ELDER: Problems, right. It wasn't solving our time problem, it was adding to it.

KURTZMAN: The product is now much more satisfying, for me, artistically. I find that I like the strip now better than ever before. I think that we did some godawful stuff working with a team, which really sets my teeth on edge. [Kurtzman's 1962 comment: "We're back to the team system again now, with apprentices Sarah Douma and Paul Felix."]

BENSON: Do you mean in terms of the climate? Or in terms of the look?

KURTZMAN: In terms of the overall product. There was a time that we had a deadline for a Christmas issue, and we just threw everybody into it. We flew to Chicago, and we all worked out of The Mansion. We made our deadlines. But it was just awful stuff.

ELDER: The thing was perplexing to me because they all tried to adapt to the technique that I started with originally, which was crude, actually.

KURTZMAN: It was the weirdest integration of talent.

ELDER: And they tried to assimilate all these various talents into one conglomerate, one blob. It just didn't gel.

KURTZMAN: Now there was an experiment for you, Jack.

ELDER: Praxella I think did some marvelous things and he did some disappointing things.

BENSON: It was interesting that, with the possible exception of Harvey, the guys that made the above-quoted comment in terms of their styles. There's a Jack Davis guy standing next to an Arnold Roth character...

KURTZMAN: They tried. They all tried.

BENSON: It wasn't evident at all. It was like a jam.

ELDER: It reminds me of those early movies like *The Big Broadcast of 1937*, or something, where everybody'd come in and do the thing they did normally on radio—a nothing picture. It was a catastrophe.

KURTZMAN: It was an interesting experiment.

ELDER: I'll tell you, I enjoyed the socializing. We got the guys together at a Longfellow hotel. We ordered eggs benedict for breakfast, living high off the *Playboy* hog. It was wonderful. We knew the bubble would burst, but...

KURTZMAN: We have marvelous memories of working as a team.

ELDER: It was fun, it was fun.

BENSON: There's been a trend from the beginning of Mad through Goodman Brown to Annie Fanny of less and less background clutter, to the point where, today, there's very little.

ELDER: You mean it's simplified?

KURTZMAN: The idea goes, the signs.

KURTZMAN: Technically.

ELDER: Well, that's something that's been disappearing.

BENSON: If you so much as part of the early Mad, especially is your talent but not your Mad talent.

ELDER: It's kind of an evolutionary thing, for several reasons. And one is that the policy of *Playboy* is a little different than Mad. They felt that they wanted to get away from the cluttered look of Mad. They didn't want to look like anything that Mad had ever done before. *Playboy* was a sophisticated magazine. A different format. Therefore, keep it that way that framework. We don't want any Mad cartoonists in this book. We want your talent but not your Mad talent.

BENSON: We want you but not what you do?

ELDER: Right. Your politics can be anything you please outside the magazine, but when it comes to each of each complicated technique. It's so time-consuming. Time, and technique, and the corrections that were involved in every single story—knowing how much time this absorbed, we had to cut down on some of it. In our work we appear alive. Otherwise it would never appear.

BENSON: Harvey once showed me a photograph of his

roughs for an early Annie Fanny...

ELDER: Harvey draws so well. And his drawings have a lot of expression, which other artists don't have. Expression is what really sells a work, I think. And he gets the feeling of the character.

BENSON: You had pencilled in all your ideas for gags in the margins of the photostat. Is that how you did your page?

KURTZMAN: Exactly that way.

ELDER: I'd read the story thoroughly. I'd try to understand... Harvey used to explain things a lot to all the artists. One thing I think we left out here, that's very important. And it's funny to me when I look back. When Harvey was the editor of Mad each artist would come into his office, and he would say, "Sit down, I got a story for you. I think it's something that you can handle." He'd start reading the story, and he'd go into this little act. Harvey would portray all the characters in the story. He'd take on these different voices. And he'd get carried away, he'd get emotional about it, you know. And I'd look at him like he's some kind of a nut. But he was acting out this story that's supposed to be on paper. I think it was a very good idea, because it really emphasized the feeling that Harvey wanted to put on these pages. And some guys just didn't grasp their feelings for a story immediately—only when he acted them out, like a kind of play-acting. I think it was a novel thing. No editor ever did that before. Who would take the time to do a thing like that. And he'd do that for me, too. But essentially over the years I kind of predicted Harvey's ideas and his thoughts, his sense of humor, and we each got to know how the other worked, we'd been "married" so long. We thought the same way, in the same vein. That doesn't exist any longer, that business of telling you the story out loud. He'd hand me the photostat of his ideas, I'd look at it, I'd read the story thoroughly. I'd know exactly what he's trying to portray here. Then I'd take the story, think of it as a whole, and interpret ideas apropos to parody, the page and then eventually the whole story. I'd lose in everything, everything that could possibly be funny. I'd gag up the page, make it more humorous than it could be.

KURTZMAN: We do try to squeeze as much into a story as we can without graphic clutter. And that's something that



Harvey really leaned on us for. And I'm not saying he was wrong. Because I think graphically we do good-looking pages. But we do, in another more subtle way, try to squeeze as much into a page as we possibly can. We try to squeeze in a lot of dialogue, a lot of gag per square inch. If you take one of our pages and compare it, say, with *Wicked Wanda*, and make an actual head count of the specific situations we have, you'll notice like a proportion of four to one.

BENSON: Do you actually read *Wicked Wanda*?

KURTZMAN: I have read it on occasion. I don't really keep up with it.

ELDER: I think it's a dick. It's very attractive.

KURTZMAN: A piece of shit.

ELDER: I'd like to get back to a point I think is very important about the policy of *Playboy* compared to Mad. I think most comic book readers have conditioned themselves to look at everything, because it's broken down into panels and every panel is something to say. It can be pictorially detailed. You look at the art. *Playboy*, on the other hand, is really very simple. Very big, bold and direct. There isn't a clutter about *Playboy*. It's telling you one thing. It's telling you six. I think it conditions their readers to use one thing and one thing only. So I think the policy laid itself to making things simplified, and in direct form. So you had to cut out all that Mad "garbage." At least, that's what they said. And I think that's the reason why it became simpler. The pace would have been slowed up tremendously if someone just saw gaudy and photographs of the same girl in varied positions, or whatever, and then suddenly this cluttered page. I think it would break up the rhythm.

BENSON: Also, remember that *Playboy* puts an awful lot of money into art direction. It's a well designed product. Good design means eye on the eye.

BENSON: Do you have anything to say about Goodman Brown?

ELDER: Oh, gee! I was hoping you'd bring that up! Because I think, for me, it was the greatest time of my life. I really enjoyed it. There again, it had all the elements we were speaking of before. It had the freedom, the feeling to express yourself without too many editors peering over your shoulder. You know, the deadline's a constant bugbear to most



One Christmas cheer EC's readers found Colin Dackens working for 4. Walter Thompson's London office. His drafty English sister once brightened by a parcel of specially drawn Christmas cards from some stockade friends. Pictured here are Elder and Kurtzman's friends.

cartoonists, and the deadline was kind of reasonable, I thought. The sooner we got it in, the better, of course. I think it was the funniest thing we ever did, because of the fact that we had all that freedom.

BENSON: Did you have any particular favorite stories? KURTZMAN: "Superman" and "Playboy." Those two, I'd say. In fact, "Playboy" . . . that particular story is what impressed Helser, I think.

KURTZMAN: Helser used to show that story around and say, "If you want to see what Helser believes in, read this story." Because, in a sense it was a put-down (of the would-be playboy). But it probably was what led to Annie Fanny, your right. The whole idea of Annie Fanny was to do Goodness Beaver as a girl. That's the way it started.

ELDER: Right, the innocence.

KURTZMAN: Goodness Beaver, of course, was fashioned after Candide.

ELDER: Or Pinocchio, for that matter.

KURTZMAN: In my mind it was Candide, very specific. The innocent boy who runs afoul of the problems of the world.

ELDER: He roasts Hugh Hunkton . . .

BENSON: Do you recall the problem of the panel shape in the paperback reprint [The Executive's Conk Book]? ELDER: We had to get a certain dimension, yeah. That was a pain in the butt.

KURTZMAN: Work. We were doing the strip, and then we got a paperback contract, so we started doing the panels longer for the paperback format. And we would cut it short for the magazine. But then we had to take all the stories that we'd done before that and doctor them for the book.

ELDER: I wish you'd dwell a little bit on Hamburg, because I thought very highly of that magazine. Hamburg was the magazine, I think, that we all fell in love with. Unfortunately, it wasn't slick enough, or it wasn't exposed properly. There's a million stories that could be told about that. Money, and dependent artists not going anywhere. I didn't contribute that much to Hamburg. I did a few things.

KURTZMAN: Oh, well, you did one of the best stories ever—that Frodo Baggins thing [Hamburg #7].

ELDER: Oh, that's right! Well, that was one of the rare ones. Yeah, that was a good one. The story I liked, by the way, was "Robinson Crusoe" [Mad #13]. I got so many letters and phone calls on "Robinson Crusoe." Most people fall in love with that one.

KURTZMAN: Isn't that funny. The one that I remember is "Sherlock Holmes" [Mad #7]. And the Katzenjammer Kids [Mad #20]. That was one of my best story structures. And you followed through on it. Well, And then Shogun and Corby ["Goshline Valley," Mad #15]. Where Will and I hit it right, we really hit. While just crowded "Sherlock Holmes" with characters.

ELDER: Well, it was crude, it was crude. But I wasn't thinking of artistic techniques. I was thinking of pure unadulterated humor, in get as crazy as I possibly could within the story limits. That's what I was after.

BENSON: It's amazing how much those early Mad influenced my whole way of thinking.

KURTZMAN: They've influenced a lot of people. You know, I was sitting yesterday with Brian McNamara, one of the early Lampoon guys. Very bright guy. I was sitting, as a matter of fact, with a group of guys, all very talented young cartoonists.

ELDER: So that's why you're not home working.

KURTZMAN: These guys were all in the right time-slot to have read the original Mad. It changed their—well, it didn't change their lives, but it really inspired them.

ELDER: That's why they got low scores on their SAT's?

KURTZMAN: They insisted that they went into the business because of that stuff. And I do think that's the way things work. I think we happened to be in the right place. We're in the hands of forces we can't quite understand. The process is marvelous. In you can fire people up, inspire people, unleash forces . . .

ELDER: It's like, what makes people stage-struck. They see someone else and they're inspired.

KURTZMAN: But Annie Fanny doesn't inspire the same response. It's fascinating to me the way Annie Fanny does affect people the way the old Mad did. But it doesn't. We probably got more integrity in the eyes of Mr. Man-in-the-street through Annie Fanny. You say, "Hey, we do Annie Fanny," and everybody goes, "Ahh!" But if you say, "Hey, you know I did the early Mad," or "I did Hamburg" or "Goodness Beaver," they go, "What?" And yet, I haven't met anybody who's said, "You know, my whole life has changed because of Annie Fanny."

ELDER: There might be some, there might be some.



KURTZMAN: Whereas I'm constantly running into people who tell me their whole life was changed by the early Mad.

ELDER: What's your opinion of Annie Fanny, honestly, John?

BENSON: It's hampered by the necessity to have a story line in which Annie underpins.

ELDER: I say the same. I say the same. Of course, there are always limitations and you have to recognize them. For what it is, under the circumstances, it's . . . I hate to use the Marx Brothers as my prototype here for what I want to express, but I have to because it's so handy. Now, the Marx Brothers, when they made their films later on like A Night in Casablanca . . . not every Marx Brothers picture's a Night of the Opera. You see, it doesn't have that class and humor at the same time. Something's lost.

KURTZMAN: What happened was, when the Marx Brothers first started, their pictures were old-fashioned. Thatberg Hollywood.

ELDER: Only two. A Night at the Opera, A Day at the Races.

KURTZMAN: I'm saying it was that type of operation. BENSON: Their early stuff was before that, though.

ELDER: At Paramount, yeah. Cocoon, Animal Crackers.

KURTZMAN: An enormous amount of material was poured into the making of the pictures. There was painstaking plotting, there were the Marx Brothers, and there were the writers and the writers and the writers. At one time when they started making pictures, doing school stuff.

ELDER: Go West; The Big Store, which was all right, actually. Love Happy . . .

KURTZMAN: . . . where the plots went out the window—no thinking was given to the plot. The Marx Brothers dominated everything, which they shouldn't have. Chico needed money, so they started grinding out the pictures. And the content just went to hell. Now in Annie Fanny the situation is different. There's a confusion of purposes. There always has been. Is it a sex cartoon? Is it a satire? What is it? The satire really is overwhelmed by the sex. Because you never see it as satirical stories. They're jockoff stories. They use a lot of guys who, I'm sure, do get the details. But that's not what people go to for. Although I wish they would, because it's there! But I think people see it as a sexy strip. Which is what it was designed as from the very beginning. But I think the sex does violence to the satire.

ELDER: It counteracts it. Very much.

BENSON: How long is it from the time you conceive a story to its completion?

KURTZMAN: It can take anywhere from five to eight months.

ELDER: It's such a complicated mess.

BENSON: Do they wait until you have one in before scheduling it?

KURTZMAN: Yeah. It's so involved.

BENSON: Because it seems to me that very often you're picking up on a trend that's just about a year old.

KURTZMAN: Exactly. Old hat.

ELDER: Bert Parks may do and there goes the Miss America stories. In fact, we just did something on Howard Hughes, Inc., and he just died. Right in the middle of a story he went and died on me. The nerve of him. Howard Hughes, Inc., the invisible man. I've got this guy unraveling himself, you know. His license plate is "MOM." But some people might be offended by it now that he's dead. The medical centers, or maybe—what the name of the place out in Salt Lake City—the Mormon temple might be offended by this idea. But that's the risk we take with humor. That happened all the time with Mad. Letters of litigation kept coming in.

BENSON: I recall that they took the McCarthy hearing notes out of the Mad Reader paperback when McCarthy died.

ELDER: In deference to his good side, I guess, whatever that happened to be. Anyhow, I feel about Annie pretty much the way you do, that visually, it's very attractive. And then you start breaking it down, and it sort of leads you into making sex more acute, more sharp, more readable, if that's possible. If it were done in "line," I don't think it would have the same impact.

BENSON: Is it true that some time after Trump folded you were actually doing wash renderings for real advertisements?



"The Mad Store Annie" was drawn especially for Dick Wolf, and is printed with his permission.

ELDER: No, not for advertisements. Well, for TV corporations. I worked for some TV outfit for awhile. And I did some movie ads for 20th Century Fox—Mr. Hobbes Takes a Vacation with Jimmy Stewart.

KURTZMAN: Well, he used to work in the agency. And, if I'm not mistaken, he did these storyboards. They have a name for these things where they actually make moving visuals, limited animation [for customer presentations].

ELDER: Then I did rendering for Whitman Chocolates. Big things, they put them on billboards. Some ten second ads. We're paying for this interview aren't we, Harvey? This is on me fella.

KURTZMAN: Oh, we'll all chip in.

ELDER: We'll split the check these ways. [Pantomimes tearing bill into three parts. I didn't give him my much-in imitation did I?]

KURTZMAN: Pleasant little place isn't it?

ELDER: Nice and homey, very cozy. That's how you sell a good egg and bacon. But the hamburger was excellent. That's tricky.

This interview was recorded on April 8, 1978. It was transcribed by Joey Cardelli, and edited for publication by John Heron.

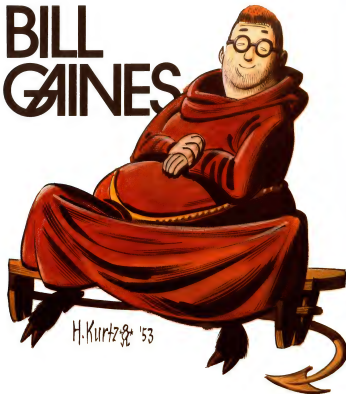
# A ROGUES GALLERY

When Marie Sewerle got her own office at ECI, she went out and bought a batch of Woolworth's 4" x 5" frames and had all the guys do self-portraits for her wall. Wally did his rear view as a gag; after Marie ordered down, he pulled out the "real" one. (The toothy gentleman carrying the portfolio is John Putnam, in case you were puzzled.)



# A CONVERSATION WITH HARVEY KURTZMAN AND

# BILL GAINES



BENSON: Do you recall when you first met Harvey?

GAINES: Oh, yes. Harvey was sent up to our outfit by an editor. His name may have been Dr. Science.

KURTZMAN: It wasn't Zerkow, was it? Because I remember I went to see him once.

GAINES: Right. It was Harvey Zerkow, because he had been associated with my father. He was on the editorial advisory board of Educational Comics when we were putting out things like *Picture Stories from American History*. So was *Sinner*; that's why I mixed the two names up.

Of course we were publishing anything and everything but educational comics by the time Harvey walked in, but he didn't know that, and he showed up with a stack of fantastically funny one-pagers. I guess they were mostly *Hey Look*, or maybe they were all *Hey Look*. What Harvey had in mind to do was humorous educational comics.

BENSON: You had done some educational comics already, right?

KURTZMAN: No, I'd played around with the idea of educational comics. I was trying to get somebody interested in—not comics, really, but educational graphics, was one thing that I was working on. I was trying to explain the ulcer graphically.

GAINES: Well, Harvey walked in, and we rapidly advised him that we were not the proper outfit for that. However, as long as he was there, he showed us his *Hey Look*'s. And I remember I was sitting at my desk, and Al Feldstein was looking over my shoulder, and we were going through one of these after another, and you know, it was brilliant. We chuckled at the first few, and by the end of this man we were . . .

KURTZMAN: Laughing!

GAINES: We were just dying, our stomachs ached with laughter. So we agreed that we had to get this talent. But how—he didn't fit at all into what we were doing. But we tried to make him fit. And the exact stuff that Harvey did was very uncomfortable with. We put him in horror comics where he was not happy.

KURTZMAN: I did that cowboy thing [*Lucky Fights It Through*].

GAINES: Oh, the very first thing, yeah. I guess we did give him something which almost approached educational comics.

KURTZMAN: The *Uppis* story. I don't think you saw how to apply my talents, because you'd just seen my funny stuff. So I got involved with your uncle on that thing. It was kind of a commercial throwaway, something that you guys weren't really interested in.

GAINES: We weren't the least bit interested in it.

KURTZMAN: I was secretly trying to show you I could do adventure cartoons, which Al didn't particularly believe, one way or the other, because he didn't see any evidence when I did the cowboy thing, then he had the evidence that I might be able to do adventure cartoons.

GAINES: I'd forgotten that.

BENSON: You had known Al Feldstein in school, right? Was there anyone else you knew at EC at that time?

KURTZMAN: Al was the only Music and Art, but we really didn't know each other. We were in totally different classes. I have to tell you a story from when I was at the High School of Music and Art. I remember one of the awful things I did at the time. It was terrible. I took it into my head that it was the greatest thing there was to throw glass bottles on the cement floor in the lunchroom. I thought it was just terrific. And this fellow came over and said, "You'd better not do that—you'll get in trouble." And he was absolutely right, it was terrible. And that guy was Al Feldstein.

GAINES: That's a marvelous story.

BENSON: Were the first stories you did for EC written by Al?

KURTZMAN: Yes.

GAINES: In those days Al wasn't even writing them. I remember a haunted house story that Harvey did that was written by Ivan Ruppler. I think.

KURTZMAN: I'm pretty sure that was Al's story.

BENSON: When did you start writing your own stories?

KURTZMAN: There were several phases that we moved through. First there were the ones where somebody else actually wrote the words, and I think "*House of Horror*" and "*Madness at Manderhill*" fell into that category, and maybe

there were others. The next phase was that I would write the story myself after the plot had been established somehow.

GAINES: "*House of Horror*" was one of the stories from *Equipe*, remember?

KURTZMAN: No, that was from *The New Yorker*.

GAINES: No, I remember it as being written by Al. KURTZMAN: No, I'd bet on it. [*Kurtzman is correct. David Dahl's "The Sound Machine" appeared in The New Yorker in 1949. But the first science fiction stories I did, I used the technique that you guys were doing, which was to work around the core of a classic. But then I . . .*]

GAINES: When you got into the science fiction, you were in a field you could do something with. And you did a few of the great EC science fiction stories like "*Henry and His Gnome Child*," and "*Gregory Had a Model T*."

KURTZMAN: Bill used to laugh over my science fiction!

BENSON: It's always fascinated me that there were virtually no lines of EC.

GAINES: I recall when Harvey made the suggestion that he do an adventure book. Now, adventure is something that he never had any feel for. I had a lot of science fiction, of course, and for horror of suspense, but I didn't know what the hell he meant by adventure. I remember the first and only adventure story that Al and I ever wrote, or attempted to write, "*Hung Kung League*." It was the most dreadful, horrible, stupid story . . . it was my attempt to plot what I thought Harvey meant by adventure. And I hated it! From then on Harvey handled his books by himself simply because I didn't have the faintest idea what the hell he was getting at.

KURTZMAN: The adventure that I had in mind can best be summed up by recalling the old Captain Gary and Wain Wain strips by Roy Crane, and I'm sure it goes back to John Ford movies. My schtick was always authenticity, adventure stories that went back to some kind of authenticity, and I think that's essentially what it was that I could get excited about and Bill couldn't. And that John Bennett character existed already. Had something to do with history and historical dates and places, and processes. *Moby Dick*—how you fense a whale. I had this vague idea of adventure which greatly excited me, which wasn't on your wavelength at all.

GAINES: Completely apart from me. For two or three years, Harvey's two books did fairly well. They were 70% sellers, where the horror books were 80% sellers.

KURTZMAN: They always were. There was no parallel between sales and what we were excited about.

GAINES: Our lowest class books were our horror books, and they sold the best. The science fiction and adventure books were weak sellers commercially. But we always felt they were our finest books.

KURTZMAN: Bill used to have this system for charting sales, which I always wonder if you would let I never quite understood. He'd keep little piles of thirty-six-page papers that would fit into the palm of your hand, and he would sit there with a slide rule and he'd make little marks on the papers, and he'd look at his slide rule and make some little marks on his paper. And at any given moment he knew what was selling.

GAINES: As best we could. We were, of course, with the weakest distribution of them all, *Leader News*. And that EC comics sold as well as they did is especially to my credit, because if the wholesalers had no use for comics, they certainly had no use for *Leader News*'s comics. And of course the reason for our success was quite simple. We did it on quality.

KURTZMAN: What always interested me was the fact that the comic book industry always used to look askance at our efforts, specifically Bill's efforts, and I always remember in being the low man on totem. Always the last in the popularity contests among the publishers. And what eventually happened is that the whole comic book business turned to our way of approach. After they pop-eyed us for years they then turned into what we were doing.

GAINES: Or did their best to turn into what we were doing. They didn't have the soul. If I sound metaphysical, I'm sorry. You'd be happy possessed to analyze some of what our stories had that their best stories didn't. But I always felt that the EC books had a certain soul.

KURTZMAN: They didn't have the profound understanding that you do have when you start something and have a real reason for starting it.

GAINES: The difference is that we loved what we were







BENSON: Why is it that you signed your horror work, but never your war work?

KURTZMAN: I have a terrible admission. I was always ashamed of being a comic book artist at the beginning.

ADELE KURTZMAN: [gasp].

KURTZMAN: I never told this to Adele.

BENSON: You signed your horror work before EC, and as soon as Mad started, you signed the covers. But you never signed the war material in between.

KURTZMAN: I signed what I thought was good. But I was ... a terrible hypocrite, isn't it?

ADELE KURTZMAN: A gorgeous one.

KURTZMAN: A gorgeous one.

GAINES: Remember that Harvey's signature was a comic signature. I don't know whether this had anything to do with it, but it might have looked strange on a war comic which he was doing with complete seriousness. To sign it with the little "i" makes it seem like he figured, subconsciously or otherwise, that it wouldn't be proper.

KURTZMAN: If I had it to do all over again today I would have signed them. But I had a terrible inferiority complex about everything I did. I used to go to school with Mad magazine hidden. A guy would ask me, "What do you do for a living?" "Unwell..."

BENSON: On the war comics, were there any conflicts?

KURTZMAN: Yeah, in Korea there was a gigantic conflict ... There were no conflicts.

GAINES: Harvey and I had a lot of financial conflicts, which came about because I was turning out seven books while Harvey was turning out two. And since I paid piecework as much per page, so much a cover, and so much per book for editing, Al was making three and a half times as much as Harvey was.

KURTZMAN: And I wanted it all!

GAINES: Well, Harvey felt that he was doing a better job than Al, which he was, you know, intrinsically. On the other hand I kept pointing out that Al's books were selling better than his, which they were. So it was kind of a stand-off, and I think it's interesting that the real reason that Mad was born was my brilliant idea of increasing Harvey's income by 50% simply by having him put out a third book which he would agree in between the two bi-monthly war books. Because I thought it would only take him a week to turn out a humor book.

BENSON: Did you expect much from Mad?

GAINES: No.

KURTZMAN: No, not really.

BENSON: When did you first feel it was going to be a big success?

KURTZMAN: I guess Bill's slide rule was the first indication. For me it was the mail.

GAINES: The first that means real money, but then the fourth made it, and from then on it just took off. But I don't think there was the kind of excitement over the comic book that there was later on when Harvey put out issue #24, the first 15¢ book. That made such a splash that we actually went back to press. It wasn't a good idea to go back to press, but the very fact that we did it indicates how well the book did. It was a relatively early print order; I think it was about 400,000. And the book was so success-

ful, and sold so fast—even through Leader News [laughs]—that they urged us to go back to press with about another 50,000. Of course, by the time we got the second run out the next issue was practically out, so you should never go back to press on a magazine unless it's a semi-annual or something, because you really don't have time. But we did it.

KURTZMAN: I forgot all about that—you're bringing back memories.

BENSON: For me, the realization that Mad was a phenomenon came with the Paganist article. How did that article come about?

KURTZMAN: There was a guy by the name of Harris Shelton.

GAINES: He died in that plane crash, didn't he?

KURTZMAN: Right. He was a very ardent editor of the times. He decided to have an article about us in Paganist. And we were very impressed. He sent Harold Hayes over to do the article, and of course that led to a whole chain of events, which over much involved the sick Mad.

GAINES: Somewhere along the line Harvey, who, as you now know, was ashamed of his comics, broached the idea to me of turning Mad into something other than a comic. I didn't know exactly what he was talking about, and probably Harvey didn't then know exactly what he was talking about either. But he wanted to get out of the war comic field, which was a good idea anyway. And I was having none of it because I was a comic publisher. I didn't want to be anything else but a comic publisher, and I said, "No." Some time later, as a result of the Paganist article, I suppose, Harvey got an offer from Shelton to come to Paganist and edit a section of the magazine.

KURTZMAN: As I remember he wanted me to be his assistant.

GAINES: I remember it more specifically than that. I think he wanted you to take over a whole section of Paganist and do your thing with it.

KURTZMAN: Possibly.

GAINES: One way or another, he made Harvey an attractive offer, financially.

KURTZMAN: I don't believe he made me a money offer. GAINES: Oh, yes! Because they knew the beginning, and they were very offered. Now, they were also offered by other things which we were completely innocent of. My favorite example of this is in "Osten Suckate."

BENSON: That's in the same issue.

GAINES: Yes. But that was Harvey's work, not mine. Or, really it was Bill Elder's work, because when Elder illustrated it he put a little sign on page one, "Nice Fat Grand Boy Wanted." Eh? Now you and I know what the nice fat grand boy was wanted for. He was wanted to be eaten. But not the wholehearted! They knew he was wanted for sexual perversion. That's what we had to deal with, oh, yes.

BENSON: Did they really think that, or were they just trying to use it ...

KURTZMAN: Now I don't feel I could match that. I don't know what I was paying in those days, but I was probably up to five hundred an issue for editing, the cover was probably \$25, and the script was maybe ten bucks a page. So Harvey was getting something in the neighborhood of eight hundred dollars an issue. And twelve issues times eight was nowhere

near twelve thousand dollars. So, remembering that Harvey had broached this idea, I countered Shelton's offer with ten thousand dollars, but offered to let Harvey change Mad into a slick. And Harvey accepted.

KURTZMAN: We were also at the crossroads, though. The comic Mad was in trouble. There was the pressure of the Comic Code.

GAINES: True. But that really was not why I did it. Because I intended to go right on publishing my other comics without joining the Code, and, if you recall, I did. It was disastrous, but I did it.

BENSON: Could you rehab the old story of your autobiography is Mad's?

GAINES: That came about when Harvey was sick, and we had to fill up the page with something. And we thought it would be a funny lark to surprise Harvey [laughs heartily] with this biography of me.

ADELE KURTZMAN: I don't remember that.

KURTZMAN: Don't you remember the time I wanted to kill?

GAINES [laughs heartily]: And of course with characteristic bad taste we offended Harvey, and also offended half the rest of the world, notably a lot of wholesalers. What we were doing with that thing was—well, we were doing a lot of things. We were trying to be funny ...

KURTZMAN: They were trying to play a little trick.

GAINES: We were trying to terrify Harvey in the hospital ...

KURTZMAN: They were trying to drive me over the edge.

GAINES: And at the same time we were taking cracks at some of the semiserious comic publishers, who shall be nameless, who actually got their original money and start in the business by publishing semi-pornography. And I used myself as an example of a typical comic book publisher who got his start by doing these things. But it was true! There were comic publishers who got their start that way. Well, it turns out these "old boy" comic publishers were belied by the "old boy" wholesalers. And this thing infuriated the wholesalers, who saw through what I was doing.

BENSON: Did they really catch that part?

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GAINES: No, so, they really believed it. What do wholesalers know about ghouls?

KURTZMAN: But they knew what nice fat grand boys are for.

ADELE KURTZMAN: Oh, that's wild.

GAINES: This is the kind of misunderstanding that were going on. And it all came at cross, but of course, they were mad at us for the horror books in the first place. Also, unfortunately, there was a convention of the bastards in New York at that particular moment.

KURTZMAN: A rough bunch of gops.

GAINES: Many of them were ignorant, uneducated, mean, and rotten. And they were tough, especially in those days. These days, they're college educated, second and third generation. But then, they had the typical hard-bat mentality of the day, and they were offended by these things. So we had a lot of a crisis there. I remember being gotten out of bed on a Saturday or Sunday morning by the cops, and having Harvey and Feldstein out, and the whole bunch of us came into the office and we dreamed up that apology to the wholesalers. And you did the beautiful cover where we were all clapping our hands begging forgiveness. Remember?

KURTZMAN: Vaguely.

BENSON: Was there a story behind all the signs saying "This is a lagoon?" in "Barbary and Ruben," Mad's?

GAINES: That was because of the "Superduperman" lawsuit.

BENSON: Is there a story there, or is it nothing more than that they sent you a letter from a lawyer?

GAINES: That's really all there was to it, a letter from a lawyer, but it evolved into an interesting story. National Comics threatened to sue for "Superduperman." And at that time my attorney, Dave Alterman, who recently died, was unfortunately also their attorney [much laughter].

KURTZMAN: Waaa! exactly what you'd call a fighting attorney.

GAINES: So he said, "Bel, you can't do that." And I said, "Well, O.K., I can see their point." I mean after all, we stole their comic hero and we took him to pieces, and they don't like it. "O.K.," Harvey was the one who said, "This is ridiculous. I think we should be able to do it." And he insisted that we get another opinion. In fact Harvey had found a book by an attorney, and in the book the attorney said, "You can do this kind of thing. No problem." And Harvey shows me this. So Dave Alterman, Harvey and I go to this attorney that wrote the book, and we say, "Here is one specific case."

KURTZMAN: Dude! he charge us like ten million dollars for stepping into the office and knocking the air?

GAINES: Just about. It wasn't ten million, it was five hundred, but in those days that was a lot of money. And we came up there and we say, "You're very generous in your book. Let's be specific. Can we not sue the 'Superduperman'?"

And the guy says, "Well, I'll have to write a whole thing. [Much laughter.] I pay him the five hundred dollars, he writes



a whole thing that says, "No, you can't do 'Superduperman.'" [More laughter.] Really. Well, at this point *Life* starts coming into the story. *Life* Stuart had this friend, Marty Schainman, who was his attorney. *Life* Stuart says, "This is ridiculous, why don't you go to another attorney?" And I said, "All right," so he took me up to meet Marty. Marty listened to the whole story, and he said, "I don't think there's any law on this. I don't think anybody knows whether you can do it or not do it, but I would tell them to go to hell." Unfortunately, I had already kind of promised not to do "Superduperman" on the basis of the opinions of the first two attorneys. But because of Marty and the strength of Marty's conviction that there really was no reason why we shouldn't do this kind of thing if we wanted to, we then just proceeded to do it, and we've just been doing it ever since. But the first hero was Harvey for saying, "Wait a minute, you listen to Dave Altshuler!" And the second hero was Marty.

ADELE KURTZMAN: Nothing like that had been done before.  
KURTZMAN: I think there had been college magazine situations, but I don't think there had been a court contest. Sometimes you'll have to explain to me why Archie Comics used me [for "Goodman Goes Playboy" in *Hot* #13] and not you [for "Starcher" in *Mad* #12].

KURTZMAN: Did you settle out of court?  
GAINES: No, we didn't.  
KURTZMAN: Yeah, settled.  
GAINES: It's never been really tested in court by anybody, which may be just as well. I personally have a code of ethics that this kind of thing, I think it's perfectly proper to do something once, or even once a while. You know, I do *Pearls* maybe every two years. But to do something as a regular feature, as you were doing with Archie...

KURTZMAN: No, we didn't.  
GAINES: I thought it was a regular feature.  
KURTZMAN: Once.  
GAINES: Once? You did it once? Just once?  
KURTZMAN: Because my feeling is the same. You know, when you're making a profit off somebody's product as a result of using their product, as opposed to commenting on the product, and if you do it more than once you're using it, you're not commenting on it.

GAINES: Just talking in general, another thing I try never to do is go into other fields. We did an article a long time ago called "Misery Is..." it didn't happen. It is... So one of the guys said, "Why don't we put out a book called *Misery Is*..." And I said, "No, now you're getting too close." See, there was a book *Happiness Is*..., and all we did was a little article on it. If somebody does a movie, we do an article on the movie. But to actually come out and do a movie making fun of *The Godfather*, a three hour movie, is a different thing. I would have to go to defend that in court. As a matter of fact, when Jack Benny did it, he lost. Jack Benny took *Gatling* and made it into a rather lengthy, I think it was a one hour television show following the plot line.

KURTZMAN: I think the reason why he lost was that they claimed that he had revealed the plot in advance of the...  
GAINES: It was more than that, Harvey. Because we reveal plots all the time. He made an entertaining thing using the actual plot in a very particular medium. That's my understanding of why he lost. I don't know. Maybe Goldwater picked on you because he figured he could bluff you out. And maybe he did.  
KURTZMAN: We just couldn't afford to go to court.  
GAINES: Well, that's it. If you'd gone to court he might have lost.

KURTZMAN: I just thought that was a terrible thing that he did.  
GAINES: You know, he had Archie's Madhouse, and I let him get away with that. But then he came out with Archie's Madhouse featuring the Madhouse Maids. On the first cover of the book there were two blonde girls called "Mad" and the word "Mad" fourteen times. And we used them and parodied it very vigorously, and he finally dropped the whole thing and agreed not to do it any more. Goldwater and I had a lot of clashes in the old days. I haven't seen him in 15 or 20 years. We've exchanged one or two friendly phone calls. I send his kids *Mad*, he sends my kids Archie.

BENSON: His kids get the better of that deal.  
GAINES: My kids don't think so.  
BENSON: The eleventh issue of *Mad* featured the

*Wolverine* Life cover parody. How that a momentous decision, to go to that kind of dispute?

KURTZMAN: Well, I don't know how Bill felt...  
GAINES: Well, I don't know how Bill felt. But that one got as into trouble too—with *Life*. And there I did have to send a letter promising not to do it again. They mailed us, if you remember, Harvey, because you need a new copy of *Life* in your inside ad. Beware of imitations. I don't think they could have done anything on the outside cover alone, but the whole thing tied in so much with *Life* that Marty didn't think it was prudent to let it. Remember, this is an untested theory, and it's hard not to test it, maybe. So Marty on occasion would bend a little and say, "You're probably right, and maybe we'll win, but why try? Who's going to do another parody of *Life* anyway?" As a matter of fact, we did do another one, and we just ignored the fact that we had agreed not to, and they didn't care. I'm sure it wasn't a factor in their going out of business.

BENSON: The next cover was even more of a non-comic, a high-class Atlantic style cover that just listed the contents in conservative black and white text. That was obviously done before the return on the eleventh issue had come in. Did you get just a little worried about that cover affecting sales?  
KURTZMAN: It was Bill's money. I didn't tend to worry as much.

GAINES: We didn't worry about that kind of thing, because I still say that the philosophy of the outfit was to do what we liked, and as long as it fit certain compulsive frameworks which I had, which drove Harvey crazy, like the first story must be eight pages, the second story seven, the third six and the fourth seven...  
KURTZMAN: Yeahhh!  
GAINES: As long as he did those things, I didn't care what else he did. Important things were important, but what the hell. And I had faith in Harvey. He would come up with these insane ideas, and they were very funny.

BENSON: As a reader, it shocked me out that you were doing dangerous things.  
KURTZMAN: I don't think we felt they were dangerous.  
BENSON: Maybe they weren't, but they seemed to be.  
KURTZMAN: They were outrageous. I think that the outrage is probably more dramatic to the reader than it is to the people who are committing the outrage, because when you commit an outrage you have a whole motivation going for it that you understand. When you're witnessing the outrage you see the dramatic aspects rather than the reasoning. It's like... I'll think up an example in the next hour... the murderer isn't as impressed by his murder as people reading about it in the paper.  
BENSON: I loved the upside down cover, *Mad* #17, where you carried the concept through fully, so that when you opened the cover there were the real back-of-the-book ads upside down.

KURTZMAN: I got such a kick out of the *Johns* Smith cover [#21], which I still read in my spare time. The thing has about three acres of two point type that you have to read with a microscope. And every sentence is funny. About a year's worth of writing went into that cover. It's sort of like reading the Lord's Prayer on the head of a pin. Sometimes you'll print that cover twelve times up, and it will all be revealed.

ADELE KURTZMAN: I remember that the black marbled composition notebook cover brought a lot of objections from teachers.  
KURTZMAN: We told kids to take *Mad* into class disguised as a notebook.

GAINES: That was so absurd. It was such a funny idea. The Harvard student I remember especially because I was so surprised, they had a reputation for being one of the best papers in the country—they blasted us for that thing, and they really seriously thought that we had published that cover to really, really let kids streak it into class. I mean, that's the way people were in those days. There's nothing you can do with people like that. You ask, weren't we afraid of doing things like that? The things that you got into with *Mad* were the things that we never dreamed would get us into trouble. Like when we had the Mona Lisa on the cover, and the Catholics thought it was the Virgin Mary.

BENSON: How did you cover up with the idea of using *Wolverine*?

# the SIXTIES by H. Kurtzman



At the end of the 1980's a promoter had a brilliant idea—a book in which leading artists and cartoonists would each have a page to make their comment on that decade. The project fell through, but we have several artists, including Kurtzman, had completed pages. His page depicts the subject, one might say.

GAINES: Harvey was looking to make fun of *Life*, which always had beautiful girls on the cover. So I guess he figured, "There could I get the most beautiful-looking girl? And who else could do it but the creator of *Life*?"

KURTZMAN: There was a certain amount of commerce with *Walters* in advance of that. I'd already used him in "The Face on the Barstool" and you remember how I took the photograph of the skyline on that cover? I was so excited. I went up to the bathroom of our office building on Lafayette Street and shot it from the bathroom window.

GAINES: Oh, that's a great story. I never knew that. BENSON: It's interesting that the entire office seemed so ideally suited for the war books suddenly become overnight so ideally suited to *Mad*. And because in fact the archetype of a certain kind of humor style.

GAINES: Well, Elder really only came into his own with the humor. He had only been asking Severn's stuff for the war books.

KURTZMAN: The pattern makes sense and all comes together when you consider wastegates and vibrations, which I'm a great believer in. I think that you work well together with people when you have sympathetic vibrations. Jack and Willy were friends, we had a similar lifestyle. They were very easy for me to communicate with. And interesting enough, our lifestyle has moved on all in the same direction. Many of the EC guys have moved on in similar patterns... who's married and who isn't.

GAINES: To interrupt this with a funny story—not funny, interesting—that isn't quite on the point. In 1963 or '4, four of us on a Mad trip to Puerto Rico engaged a young couple who ran a snorkeling excursion business. There was Joe Orlando, Al Jaffe, Al Feldstein and myself. And we went out with this couple, had a wonderful day. A few years later I went back down there with my kids, and I remembered this wonderful day and I wanted my kids to go snorkeling. By this time I was separated from Nancy. So I took in the red book and I find the name. I call him and sure enough, he comes in the same station wagon and picks us up, and as he's driving as I ask, "Where's your wife?" And he says, "Oh, we were divorced." And suddenly it occurs to me: so are the four guys who were with him that day.

KURTZMAN: I think practically everybody in the group broke up, with the exception of the guys who worked with me.

GAINES: Except for Wally. KURTZMAN: Well, Wally was the hardest one to work with. But I used to work with Will and Jack and John Severn. And they were the guys who didn't break up in the whole organization.

GAINES: That's not quite true. Bernie Kirgstein didn't break up. Jack Kamen didn't break up. George Vorse...

KURTZMAN: You're right. GAINES: I would say about half the guys broke up and half didn't, of the old group of 14. Johnny Craig is still with his wife. Graham might be considered broke up.

BENSON: Some Hey Look's were run in the Mad comics...

KURTZMAN: I was trying to figure out ways to fill in.

GAINES: Harvey couldn't quite make the schedule. But in a way the Hey Look's were the reason for *Mad*'s existence, so it seems proper that they should have had a place in *Mad* magazine. Because if I hadn't seen those Hey Look's, it never would have occurred to me to suggest that Harvey do a humor magazine.

KURTZMAN: The Hey Look's were sort of the beginning of everything. They had a certain spirit because of the way they were done. In that particular case also, Stan Lee was particularly democratic in the way he gave me independence. I guess it was just because they didn't count. So they were done with that same free spirit of no control.

BENSON: When Mad became a success about a dozen imitations came out about the end of 1952. I suppose it was just a continuation of what had happened to the other EC books, but how did you feel about those imitations?

GAINES: Bitter, of course. In the beginning, 1950, when we started our New Trend magazine EC was imitating. We were publishing what we felt was original and never before there, in spite of the fact that we had it. And it's true that everybody was imitating them. And when Mad came along,

that was even more original in a way. And I always resented people stealing our stuff and imitating it. There was nothing you could do about it. Harvey did about as good as you could with his "House of Imitations" ad, which was very funny and is still up-to-date.

KURTZMAN: Creativity is not a commodity that's easy to come by. And certainly in the comic business while there are a lot of guys who can render, there aren't as many guys who are creative. Everybody's hungry for new styles and new things, and they're inspired by them. When someone breaks new ground, the crowd quickly breaks the break. But that's good, that's OK. That's the way things evolve and change, and that's life. Imitation is flattery and I never resented it that much. But I guess we always all felt that there were a lot of greenbacks slipping away. There's always that nagging thing in the back of your mind that you've started something and you want all the profits you can. But I think that when you come out with something original you do tend to create a market. You've created new consciousness where none existed before for both yourself and for imitators. Playboy swam up and down that the existence of Penthouse and *Clut* had created a new paper market where there was none before, so they are off selling. But it's hard for me to believe that it will go on forever.

GAINES: Well, that did happen with Playboy, which has had a number of successful imitations which made money and a lot of which are still in existence. But that wasn't so true with *Mad*, because all those imitations that came out while *Mad* was a comic were very short-lived. They all completely missed what *Mad* was about, and just tried to imitate its craziness. They didn't last long, three issues, six issues. I don't think they made a market at all.

KURTZMAN: You know, one of the funniest things for me to take, when I was cutting around after a long time and I'd had a project here and a thing there... there was one publisher, and I really forgot who it was—possibly I deliberately forgot—he wanted me to do something, and we were talking over ideas. And I said, "Let's do a humor thing." And he said, "This isn't good enough. I want you to do it like *Mad*."

GAINES: Did he know what he was saying? Did he know what he was talking about?

KURTZMAN: What he was trying to say was, why don't you do something crazier. Like, when the imitations of *Mad* came out they said, "Oh, *Mad*. OK, it's obviously a crazy thing, let's do something crazy crazy and we get it." But obviously they didn't get it, because they didn't understand the essence of what it was.

GAINES: But the point is that *Mad*'s imitations never opened a big market. The only magazines that have lasted any length of time are *Sick* and *Crooked*. And they hold on incredibly. How they hold on I don't know, because I know what they sell, and we literally couldn't think something like 12 to one.

KURTZMAN: They hold on with John Severn. Also I suspect part of their secret is that they're distributor oriented operations. The guy who does *Crooked*, Speed, is the son of a very big distributor's agent, old Joe Sproat.

GAINES: Joe Sproat used to work with Wyn at Ace, and I knew Joe. He was a very nice man, and as a matter of fact I was almost distributed through Ace. I was signed up to Ace, and then we merged it because of complications too involved to go into here.

KURTZMAN: When I think back to the history of the problems of the magazines and how those things used to depress me... Did you watch *An American Family*? There was an interview with this guy Lloyd, the father. He's a very competent American businessman in some kind of heavy equipment work, with apparently a very nice business going. And the interviewer was asking him, "Do you ever feel despair about your son?" And he heard back and he said, "Despair? I don't think I ever feel despair, well, maybe one time in my life." And I was thinking, there are people who don't feel despair! There are actually people who don't feel despair. And I remember these problems you used to have with distribution and so on. Despair! Despair!

This interview was conducted on May 9, 1973. It was transcribed by Barry Nivens, and edited for publication by John Deacon.

PAUL,

My son, Paul, who is eleven years old, belongs to the EC Fan-Addict Club, a synthetic organization set up as a promotional device by the Enterprising Comics Group, publishers of *Mad* ("Take Calendars to the Beach, You MAD—Humor in a Jugular Vein"), *Pencil* ("This Is No Comic Book, This is a FANCY—Humor in a Varicose Vein"), *Joker from the Crypt*, *The Vault of Horror*, *Weird Science*, *Shock*, *Savage Stories*, *Cosmo*, *Savage Stories* ("Joking Tales of Tension in the EC Tradition"), and, I imagine, various other such periodicals. For his twenty-five dollar membership fee (soon to be raised to fifty cents), the EC Fan-Addict receives a humorous, phrased certificate of membership, a wall-size "identification card," a pin and a shoulderpatch bearing the club emblem, and, best of all, a copy of the club bulletin, which publishes obituary about the writers, artists, and editors, releases tall balloons on ideas for new comic books, lists members' requests for back numbers, and in general tries to foster in the membership a sense of identification with this particular publishing company and its staff. EC Fan-Addict Club Bulletin #5, March 1964, contains several practical advice for the members. "Everytime you pass your newswall, fish out the EC's from the bottom of the piles or racks and put 'em on top..." BUT PLEASE, YOU MONSTERS, DO IT NEATLY.

Paul, I think, does not quite take this "club" with full seriousness, but it is clear that he does in some way value his membership in it, at least for the present. He has had the club shoulderpatch put on his jacket, and when his membership pin broke recently he took the trouble to send for a new one. He has recruited a few of his schoolmates into the organization. If left free to do so, he will buy any comic book which bears the EC trademark, and is usually quite satisfied with the purchase. This is not a matter of "loyalty," but seems to reflect some real standard of discrimination; he has occasionally sampled other comic books which imitate the EC group and finds them inferior.

It should be said that the EC comic does in fact display a certain imaginative flair. *Mad* and *Pencil* are devoted to a wild, undisciplined machine-gun attack on American popular culture, creating an atmosphere of nagging irritability something like the growing of Jerry Lewis. They have come out with covers parodying the Saturday Evening Post and *Life*, and once with a vaguely "serious" cover in imitation of magazines like *Harper's* or the Atlantic. ("Do you want to look like an idiot? Buy comic books all your life! Buy *Mad*. Then you can look like an idiot reading high-class literature.") The current issue of *Mad* (dated August) has Luciano's Moss Lisa on the cover, writing as outrageously as ever and creating a copy of *Mad* in her arms. The tendency of the humor, in its insistent violence, is to reduce all values to subordinate sterility. These comic books are the direct descent from the Marx Brothers, from the Three Stooges whose funniest business is to poke their fingers in each other's eyes, and from that comic orchestra which starts out playing "serious" music and ends up with all the instruments smashed. A very funny parody of the comic strip "Little Orphan Annie" in *Mad* or *Pencil*, shows Annie out orphaned small pieces by a train because Daddy Warbucks' watch is slow and he has had just too late for the last minute, Annie's detached head complains: "It hurts when I laugh." The parody ends with the most obvious and most vulgar explanation of why Annie calls



AND DR. WERTHAM

BY ROBERT WARSHOW

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of these articles were shrill, hysterical and aggressively incoherent (in prime example of the latter being T.E. Murphy's characterization of the Mad Scientist and the Mad Scientist Rant as straight-out horror and crime scenes).

Warshaw obviously had nothing in common with these commercial cowards. His concern was to come as close as he could to the truth about his subject, and his article makes a number of perceptive and acute observations—perhaps the most telling ones being in his extended discussion of Wertham's moral confusion when dealing with the comic industry's cynicism. Wertham's unbridled approach leads to the interesting observation, made even while condemning the horror comics, that they are "faster and more imaginative" than the institutionally more moderate DC titles. His discovery that a child's interest in how comics are produced helps protect him from the material is also interesting—though the important clue of Paul recognizing Johnny Craig from a drawing that the artist in question had slipped off Wertham's trousers to the fact that EC was an active participant in this process.

Especially good are Warshaw's frank character studies of himself and Al. His willingness to admit to finding some merit in the comics he hated Mad "with a kind of irritated pleasure," for example—is an essential part of the essay and well illustrates Lovell Trilling's statement, "The principle by which Warshaw's work was never to separate himself from the matter at hand, always to implicate himself in it."

Warshaw's reluctant defense of comics as a "sinful" world which children need to enter to "retreat from the demands of the adult world," interestingly prefigures Jules Feiffer's very same point over ten years later in *The Great Comic Book Heroes* ("A child, simply to save his sanity, must go underground. Have a place to hide where he cannot be got at by grownups.")

Finally, though Warshaw expresses concern with the gruesomeness of the horror comics (you can imagine Paul being thankful that his father hadn't discovered that "Fool Play" was an EC story), he above of all the critics of comics points out another—and for me a more disturbing—aspect of many comics, including EC's: their emphasis on "the insatiable logic of personal interest." "The comic book conception of human nature which sees everyone as a potential criminal and every criminal as an absolute criminal."

The open-mindedness and thoroughness that characterize this essay are also to be found in Robert Warshaw's other critical essays on the popular arts (mostly movies) that are collected in his *The Immediate Experience*. Currently available

in paperback from Atheneum, it has remained in print since it was published twenty years ago. The rest of the book fully measures up to "Paul, the Horror Comics, and Dr. Wertham" and is highly recommended. Sadly, the book represents the majority of Warshaw's critical output; he died of a heart attack at the age of 37 in 1955.

At one might guess from the essay's description of his shifting interests, Paul had interest in EC shortly after "Paul, the Horror Comics, and Dr. Wertham" was written, though not before having a letter published in *Critics Superstorm* a 25. Like many others, he put his ECs away, thinking that they he saved, and didn't think much about them until, again like many others, he went to pull them out a few years back with the idea of selling them, and found that many of them had been thrown out.

He has no interest in reading ECs today, although, he says, "I'm still interested in the time that I was interested in them." When looking through his ECs prior to selling them, Paul—now older than his father was when "Paul, the Horror Comics, and Dr. Wertham" was written—was struck by what he called the "very shallow cynicism" of the horror and crime stories. And although he was pleased to find in Mad—much had been his favorite and the title that had initially interested him in EC—the cleverness and invention that he'd remembered, he was surprised and disappointed to find this same kind of violence and cynicism pervading Mad as well. Essentially, it seems, he found himself in agreement with his father's assessment.

Paul's observation is that a child somehow doesn't mind the cynicism in the way that an adult does. He says, "The adult is upset that the world of the comic books is such a false and offensive version of real life. The child doesn't care about the relationship of the comic book world and real life, i.e. the adult world. He has still acquired relatively little knowledge of this 'real life,' or perhaps one might better say, he still has not joined the adult world. And he's just as happy to postpone a little longer the acquiring of this knowledge. He asks of the comics only that they be interesting and exciting, without regard to this adult sort of 'truth.' Thus the possibility of 'offensiveness' doesn't exist for him. And about I've said about children is likewise true for those adults (or one part of them) who can still read comics with the wholeheartedness of children."

Paul Warshaw has taught film and has published articles, mainly on film, for *Film Quarterly* and other magazines.

—John Bonasa

## IN MEMORIAM

### ROY G. KRENKEL

About a week before the pages of this issue were located in, Roy Krenkel died. His death, from cancer, was not unexpected, but it took us by surprise anyhow. Roy was no completely alive—there's no other word for it, he could make anything he happened to be talking about sound absolutely fascinating. Often the subject would be drawing, or collecting, or work on the comic industry—Roy's passion. His temperamental didn't lead him in the direction of creating large finished works—he only did a few complete comic book stories and not that many finished paintings. But he sketched constantly, and to through stacks of Krenkel sketches is to marvel at his imagination and technique. Most of them have never been published, though plans are afoot to republish this. One publication and dozens from the Ancient World from Oldworld Press, is especially interesting because of Krenkel's very lucid introduction about an artist's creative process.

He influenced many fantasy artists who are better known than he is, not only by example, but through discussion and by exposing them to his large collection of American and European illustration of the past 100 years. Roy is still probably best known as the creator of the fantastic titles in Al Williamson's EC stories. Hopefully he'll be better known in the coming years for his other outstanding work.

## BACK ISSUES AVAILABLE

**SQUA THONT 2 (1980).** 38 page issue. Color covers by Foghorn and Crandall. The EC science fiction comics. Features on Fraxetta, Crandall and strips, with unpublished newspaper strips. \$5.95.

**SQUA THONT 3 (1981).** Color covers by Crandall. Features on the EC 3-D comics were made. The making of the Ghoulardi photos. Art by Wood, Crandall, Ingels, Elder. \$4.00.

**SQUA THONT 4 (1982).** Special Edward Kravitz issue! Revealing previously unpublished interview. His Red Badge of Courage breakdowns. Arriving "Maurice" in the EC comics.

**SQUA THONT 7 (1987).** Special Color issue. Roy Krenkel is color. Krenkel's rare 1948 8 page EC comic about V.I. Special limited series issue. The EC feature feature. Original Elder covers in color. Williamson, Kravitz, etc. \$4.00.

**PANELS 1 (1979).** 16 page retrospective with W.E. Kravitz, Jules Feiffer, Ed Giffith. \$2.50.

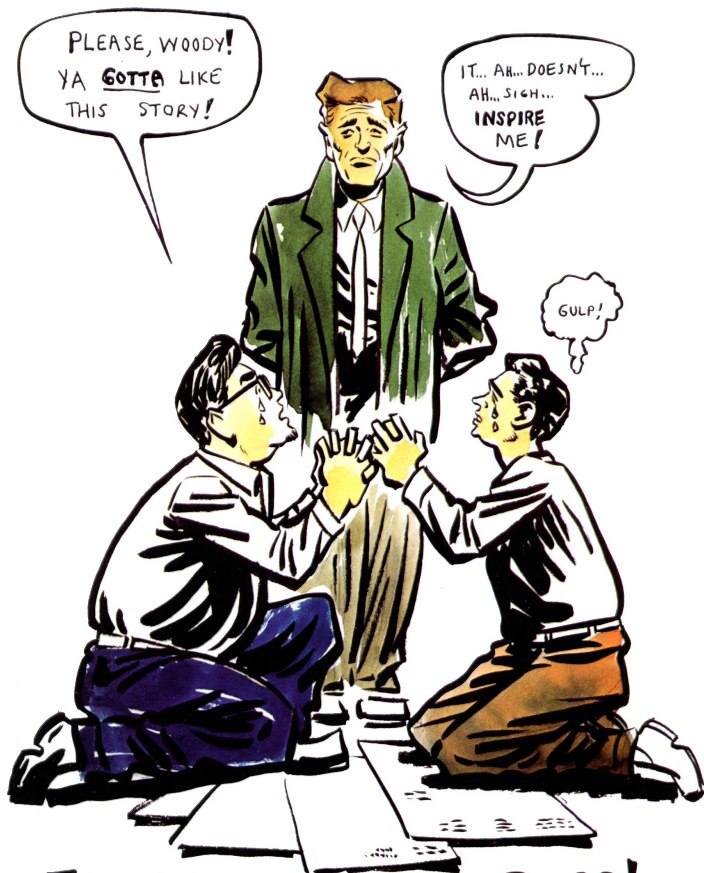
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